FORTEANA

Charles Fort

The Fortean Society

Unidentified Flying Objects

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CHARLES FORT,

THE FORTEAN SOCIETY, &

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

A survey of the unidentified flying object mystery from August, 1895, to August, 1947.

by

Loren E. Gross

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THE FORTEAN SOCIETY

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Member Ray F Smith

Secretary

As I was returning home from the *Royal Society* to *Weſtminſter*, on *Thurſday*, Dec. 16. 1742. h. 8. 40'. *p. m.* being about the Middle of the Parade in *St. James's Park*, I ſaw a Light ariſe from behind the Trees and Houſes in the S by W. Point, which I took at firſt for a large Sky-Rocket; but when it had riſen to the Height of about 20 Degrees, it took a Motion nearly parallel to the Horizon, but waved in this manner,

and went on to the N. by E. Point over the Houſes. It ſeemed to be ſo very near, that I thought it paſſed over *Queen's Square*, the Iſland in the Park, croſs the Canal, and I loſt Sight of it over the *Haymarket*. Its Motion was ſo very ſlow, that I had it above half a Minute in View; and therefore had Time enough to contemplate its Appearance fully, which was what is ſeen in the annexed Figure,

A ſeemed to be a light Flame, turning backwards from the Reſiſtance the Air made to it. *B B* a bright Fire like burning Charcoal, incloſed as it were in an open Caſe, of which the Frame *C C C* was quite opaque, like Bands of Iron. At *D* iſſued forth a Train or Tail of light Flame, more bright at *D*, and growing gradually fainter at *E*, ſo as to be tranſparent more than half its Length. The Head ſeemed about half a Degree in Diameter, the Tail near 3 Degrees in Length, and about one Eighth of a Degree in Thickneſs.

C. M.

Other works by the author

The UFO Wave of 1896

The Mystery of the Ghost Rockets

The cover of the October, 1946, issue of Amazing Stories reprinted by permission. Copyright, 1946, by the ZIFF-DAVIS Company. Artist: Robert Gibson Jones

Chapter One

Also Sprach Zarthustra

"Apostle of the Exception, Keeper of the Ghosts, Observer of Secret Rays, Avenger of Forgotten Theories, Lost Causes, and Strayed Comets. . . ," (1.) so wrote the famous author Ben Hecht many years ago to introduce a remarkable contemporary writer he knew and admired. The gentleman who so fascinated Mr. Hecht was an eccentric New York literary figure by the name of Charles Fort.

Fort, who died some forty years ago, is still looked upon by some as another Ripley, while others interpret him as the arch-enemy of dogma, and then there are a few who prefer to remember him as a kind of philosopher who proposed wild theories using an entertaining writing style. However Fort has gained immortality more as a prophet, because of his investigations into what many erroneously consider a modern riddle, the mystery of unidentified flying objects.

The unidentified flying object (UFO) mystery first achieved enduring national prominence in 1947, but a look at the years previous to that time, as far back as the 1890s, with an emphasis on the career of Charles Fort, provides an interesting prelude to the "modern" UFO enigma.

Our story begins with an event that occurred in Ireland, in 1895, far removed geographically from where Fort was living at the time in New York. In Culdaff, Ireland, on August 24, 1895, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, a small boy by the name of Robert Alcorn went out the front door of his house to chase some noisy chickens out of the yard. Once outside the youngster's attention was immediately drawn to a brilliant fireball in the sky approaching him out of the northwest. The fireball looked to be about six feet square in size, the boy comparing its bulk to a piece of family furniture of similar dimensions.

As the object passed low overhead there was a sharp report like a gunshot and a spark of fire zoomed down at the boy. Robert just had time to throw up his hands and protect his face, as the spark exploded near his head. Robert's father had heard the loud sounds and rushed outdoors to find his son bleeding from wounds on the face and hands. Doctors that treated the injuries found deep cuts on the boy's blackened left cheek and three fingers on one hand so badly shattered they had to be amputated. The police investigated the incident with the idea that someone had fired a gun at the boy or had thrown some sort of explosive, but the youth stuck to his fireball story.

It was later learned that persons living at the town at Redcastle, eight miles south of Cudaff, had also seen a bright fireball in the heavens the same afternoon as the Cudaff incident.(2.)

Six days later two people saw what appeared to be a star moving through the sky over England. The point of light was watched for about four and a half minutes as it sailed horizontally from west to east. A letter about the sighting was printed in the London Times. (3.) Whether or not the witnesses lived in London is not

clear, but further letters to the Times during the following days told of similar sightings from as far away as Oxford.

At Margate, England, about 10:15 in the evening of August 30th, a strange "meteor" was sighted in the sky. The "meteor" gave the impression that it was cruising slowly at a low altitude to the northwest. The thing looked triangular in shape and was moving with the base foremost. Furthermore, the witness believed he saw the "meteor" give off a few "reddish sparks." (4.)

Just about 8 o'clock on August 31st a Mr. J. A. Murray was taking a stroll near St. John's College at Oxford, England, when a "brilliant luminous body" appeared above the treetops flying on an eastward heading. Initially, Mr. Murray believed the object to be an extraordinary bolide, but it moved so slowly it stayed in sight for some time and instead of falling to the earth or exploding, the object flew off at a steady altitude, getting perceptively dimmer as it receded. Mr. Murray wrote the Times,(5.) and when his letter appeared in the September 4th edition, others penned letters to the Times' editor corroborating the story.

On September 2nd another report came in from Bath, England, a city about 50 miles southwest of Oxford. A Mr. "A.F." wrote to the London Times stating that he and a friend saw something of a curious appearance that day around 10:15 p.m. The object was a bright body moving leisurely and looked to be half the size: ". . . of the full moon, and that it had a tail, brilliant, full, but rather short." Mr. "A.F." declared: ". . .we both saw [the] large, luminous, comet-like body sweep down from the sky in a slightly curved line and disappeared behind the wooded horizon in the southwest." His letter ended by asking: "Will a Greenwich [Observatory] sage expound this weird phenomenon for the benefit of those who find ignorance no bliss and wisdom no folly?" (6.)

The London Times titled all of the 1895 flying light stories in the following manner: "Remarkable Meteoric Appearance." But in America such unusual aerial activity was destined to provoke a different reaction.

For two hundred years mankind had made efforts to conquer the air, trying to invent a true flying machine. All attempts miscarried and were lampooned, burlesqued on the stage, and pursued with the mocking of the public. It wasn't until the late 1800s that the general principles of true flight were believed to be more or less scientifically sound, as improvements in the art of free ballooning showed considerable promise.

As the end of the century approached, a series of scientific inventions amazed the public. It was one thing to try and imitate the motion of animals, like the birds, but when Germany's professor Roentgen discovered X-Rays in 1896, people were astonished. Here was something with great powers hitherto unimagined.

American contributions were no less astonishing. Alexander Graham Bell producing the telephone and the genius of Thomas Edison creating a number of marvels, the electric light, the phonograph, and the kinetoscope just name a few.

Considering the pace of invention and the revolutionary nature of the new novelties, many people became downright impatient with the lack of progress when inventor after inventor failed to build a true airship. And the fault was not for the lack of anyone

trying, for nearly every major American city had a local inventor who boasted of plans, drew up blueprints, made models, or even constructed a full-scale machine.* Such was the state of affairs when "remarkable meteors" put in appearances in the skies over the United States.

The excitement started in November, 1896, when a brilliant point of light was reported moving about in the night sky over many cities in California. The phenomenon produced a sensation and rumors that a powered balloon, a true airship, had been invented, spread rapidly.

An examination of the times and locations of the airship reports arouses suspicions that people were fooled by Venus since the mysterious light was seen low in the west around sundown in the majority of cases, however the two well-witnessed sightings of a mysterious light passing over Sacramento could not have been caused by a planet or star. A balloon carrying a Japanese lantern would be a much better explanation since the sending up of suoh balloons was common during Fourth of July celebrations, yet witnesses in Sacramento were startled by the flying light because of its extraordinary brilliance, and, as one witness noted, the light was traveling against the wind. When the mystery light first appeared over Sacramento in the early evening of November 17th, it moved through the sky in a south, southwest, direction. Weather records show that there had been brisk winds that day out of the southwest. Likewise, the mystery light made a well-witnessed pass over Sacramento the early evening of November 22nd, coming out of the west and leaving on a southwest course. Weather records state that the wind that day was out of the southeast.

Even more remarkable was one report made by two Methodist ministers near Knights Ferry, California, on November 22nd. The two clergymen reported a glowing object on the ground about 200 yards away which rose in the air and flew off as they approached. (7.) The report compares favorably with a modern UFO sighting.

Some of the strange flying lights seen in the skies over California in 1896 may well have been balloons, but the reports from the Sacramento Valley region were particularly intriguing like the following account in the Winters (California) Express:

> Tuesday evening [November 24th] about six o'clock, lights were seen moving along the hillsides west of Winters, going with a steady horizontal motion at an altitude about half way to the top of the mountain range. There were three lights, equidistant from each other, the center

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*For a better understanding of the early American experiments with airships and the reaction of the public and press, one should read the chapter "The Amazing Dr. Saloman Andrews," in the book, Ships In The Sky by John Toland, Henry Holt and Company: New York, 1957.

some feet higher than the front and rear light. They seemed, without a doubt, to be fastened to or a part of a huge body not discernible in the night, and moved steadily, but not very fast to the southward, finally disappearing beyond the lower hills.

John Sackett also saw the thing very distinctly. It was almost directly over his house, four miles west of Winters, and was not over three or four hundred feet high. The lights were visible several minutes, but rapidly disappeared to the southward. (8.)

A heated controversy over the exact nature of the mysterious California "airship" continued for weeks but the riddle defied explanation. One San Franciscan, Dana Thomas, did not think much of the excitement or the sensational treatment the subject was receiving from the press. One evening during the height of the airship flap Mr. Thomas noticed a crowd of people getting excited over a light in the night sky he immediately recognized as the plant Mars, at that time the "seasonal star." Mr. Thomas lived to a ripe old age and would prove to have a good memory. (9.)

Ex-California Attorney General W. H. H. Hart, who, with the help of the sensation-prone San Francisco Call, caused some debate over his claims that he knew all about the mystery airship and its secret inventor, finally revealed a drawing of the alleged airship on January 10, 1897. (10.) The "airship" as described by Hart was ridiculous even by 1890 standards, but the claims by the ex-Attorney General were not nearly as fantastic as some of the stories that would be carried in the newspapers later on in 1897. A few peculiar stories had already begun to appear in the press as early as November, 1896. For example, a hunter claimed he had come across the airship and its inventors while walking through the woods in Marin County. The inventors were quite ordinary people he asserted. Needless to say, these alleged inventors, who had beaten the Wright brothers by a decade, never came out of hiding to be recorded by history. The foregoing story was tame compared to the one told by John A. Heron, of San Jose, a man well known for telling tall tales. He boasted he had taken a two-day cruise to Honolulu and back aboard the mystery airship. And in San Diego a man, who was obviously deranged, told authorities he had ridden in the airship to heaven where he had conversed with angels.

But perhaps the most fascinating reading was in the Stockton, California, Evening Mail. A series of interesting news stories began when the Mail printed a story about an astronomer named Swift who saw something unusual in the California sky, close to the horizon near the setting sun, on September 20, 1896. Professor Swift noticed what he believed to be a brilliant new comet and grabbed an opera glass to get a better look. He saw: ". . . three bodies forming a right triangle. . ." A pair of field glasses was then procured and Swift examined the three bodies under higher magnification. He stated: "The brighter of the two must have been several times more brilliant than Venus, which was not visible for

some time after the sun sank and then only as a faint point of light. The next evening Professor Smith was ready with a 4-1/2 inch telescope. This time he only saw a faint point of light. He never saw the objects again. (11.)

A month later a second phenomenon caused a stir. A John Ahern was out walking with his dog near Stockton the evening of October 22nd when he was suddenly startled. So was his dog; the animal had mastered the trick of carrying a lantern in its mouth, but the startled canine became as bug-eyed and slackjawed as his master, letting the light slip to ground where it was snuffed out. A creepy feeling came over Mr. Ahern when the night's darkness abruptly closed in. He felt very alone in the blackness as he beheld an eerie sight in the heavens, for out of the western sky sailed three brilliant points of light moving with majestic slowness. The Evening Mail described the phenomenon in the following words:

> Three large balls of fire were strung together. The first appearing to be the largest. From the third a tail of fire extended apparently fifteen feet long. While the balls seemed to be ten feet apart. Of course the distances were much greater than that, but that is how they appeared.
> It gradually faded from view. *(12.)

The Evening Mail, in a half serious way, suggested that professor Swift's comet in September and the appearance of the three strange meteors a month later, meant that the earth had captured three asteroids which were trapped in a 30-day orbit.

It then came as something of a pleasant surprise to the Mail when a mysterious light was reported over Sacramento on November 17th. The month long cycle seemed to be valid, so the Mail repeated its earlier theory and chose to compare the asteroids in orbit to a spacecraft in a Jules Verne novel which circled the moon. (13.)

The idea of a mechanical device took hold in Stockton. A number of notes allegedly from an airship were discovered and were discussed in Evening Mail's November 26th edition. The notes were more of a joke than anything else and that is how the Mail treated them. A really amazing story, however, appeared in the paper the next day:

> For more than a week the papers all over the coast have been reporting the presence of an alleged airship or flying machine, which many reputable people claim to have seen on several occasions in the heavens at night. Whether or not there really is such a contrivance navigating the air the Mail is unable to

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*Mr. J. B. Loser, C. T. Musse, and A. H. Tompson, evidently confused these meteors with the "airship" reported in November. See my booklet: The UFO Wave of 1896, p. 15.

satisfactorily determine, but some of the papers have taken the matter seriously and others have been disposed to make light of the statements. A couple of San Francisco attorneys have secured a lot of free advertising by claiming to have clients who have invented and tested successful flying ships, and the newspapers have filled several columns talking about the aerial mystery.

The Mail then continues:

> The Mail makes the above statement merely by way of preface to a most remarkable story which is related by Colonel H. G. Shaw of this city, formerly of the Mail editorial staff. Colonel Shaw is at present engaged in collecting an exhibit for the Stockton Commercial Association to be displayed at the Citrus Fair which will be held in Fresno during the coming month. The gentleman was very reticent about relating the circumstance, as he said he had no idea that it would be believed by anyone, and he was loath to appear before the public as a romancer. . . .

The Mail at this point inserts a subheading: "THREE STRANGE BEINGS," and begins a long quote from Colonel Shaw:

> "Were it not for the fact that I was not alone when I witnessed the strange sight I would never have mentioned it at all. Wednesday afternoon I went out to Lodi and Lockeford in company with Camille Spooner, a young man recently arrived from Nevada. I went to the places mentioned in quest of material to form an exhibit to represent this county at the Fresno Citrus Fair. We left Lodi on the return trip, I should judge, shortly before 6 o'clock, and we were jogging along quietly when the horse stopped suddenly and gave a snort of terror. Looking up we beheld three strange beings. They resembled humans in many respects, but still they were not like anything I had ever seen. They were nearly or quite seven feet high and very slender. We were both somewhat startled, as you may readily imagine, and the first impulse was to drive on. The horse, however, refused to budge, and when we saw that we were being regarded more with an air of curiosity than anything else we concluded to get out and investigate. I walked up to where the strange looking persons were and addressed them. I asked where they were from. They seemed not to understand me, but began—well, 'warbling' expresses it better than talking. Their remarks, if such you would call them, were addressed to each other, and sounded like a monotonous chant, inclined to be gutteral. I saw it was no use to attempt a conversation, so I satisfied myself with watching and examining them. They seemed to take great interest in ourselves, the horse and buggy, and

scrutinized everything very carefully.

Here another subheading was inserted by the Mail: WEIGHED LESS THAN AN OUNCE EACH." The story continued:

"While they were thus engaged I was enabled to inspect them as well. As I have already stated, they were seven feet in height and very slender. I noticed, further, that their hands were quite small and delicate, and that their fingers were without nails. Their feet, however, were nearly twice as long as those of an ordinary man, though they were narrow, and the toes were also long and slender. I noticed too, that they were able to use their feet and toes much the same as a monkey; in fact, they appeared to have much better use of their feet than their hands. I presently discovered that this was probably a provision of nature. As one of them came close to me I reached out to touch him, and, placing my hand under his elbow, pressed gently upward, and lo and behold I lifted him from the ground with scarcely an effort. I should judge that the specific gravity of the creature was less than an ounce. It was then that I observed him try to grasp the earth with his toes to prevent my lifting him. You can readily understand that their slight weight made such a provision necessary, or they might be blown away.

"They were without any sort of clothing, but were covered with a natural growth hard to describe; it was not hair, neither was it like feathers, but it was as soft as silk to the touch, and their skin was like velvet. Their faces and heads were without hair, the ears were very small, and the nose had the appearance of polished ivory, while the eyes were large and lustrous. The mouth, however, was small, and it seemed to me that they were without teeth. That and other things led me to believe that they neither ate nor drank, and that life was sustained by some sort of gas. Each of them had swung under the left arm a bag to which was attached a nozzle, and every little while one or the other would place the nozzle in his mouth, at which time I heard a sound as of escaping gas. It was much the same sound as is produced by a person blowing up a foot-ball.

A third subheading read: "OF INDESCRIBABLE BEAUTY." The Colonel went on to say:

"From the description I give I do not want you to get the idea that these creatures were hideous. In appearance they were markedly the contrary. They were possessed of a strange beauty. I can express myself in no other way. They were graceful to a degree, and more divinely beautiful than anything I ever beheld.

"The strangest part of this story is yet to come. It is the lights they carried. Each held in his hand something

about the size of a hen's egg. Upon holding them up and partly opening the hand, these substances emitted the most remarkable, intense and penetrating light one can imagine. Notwithstanding its intensity it had no unpleasant effect upon our eyes, and we found we could gaze directly at it. It seemed to me to be some sort of luminous mineral, though they had complete control of it.

"Finally they became tired of examining us and our horse and buggy, and then one of them, at a signal from one who appeared to be the leader, attempted to lift me, probably with the intention of carrying me away. Although I made not the slightest resistance he could not move me, and finally the three of them tried it without the slightest success. They appeared to have no muscular power outside of being able to move their own limbs.

A fourth subheading read: "STRANGE AIRSHIP." The weird story finished with the following statement:

"Well, after trying in vain to move either of us they turned in the direction of the Woodbridge canal, near which we were, and as they flashed their lights towards the bridge we beheld a startling sight. There, resting in the air about twenty feet above the water, was an immense airship. It was 150 feet in length at least, though probably not over twenty feet in diameter at the widest part. It was pointed at both ends, and outside of a large rudder there was no visible machinery. The three walked rapidly toward the ship, not as you or I walk, but with a swaying motion, their feet only touching the ground at intervals of about fifteen feet. We followed them as rapidly as possible, and reached the bridge as they were about to embark. With a little spring they rose to the machine, opened a door in the side, and disappeared within. I do not know of what the affair was built, but just before it started I struck it with a rock and it gave no sound. It went through the air very rapidly and expanded and contracted with a muscular motion, and was soon out of sight.

"I have a theory, which, of course, is only a theory, that those we beheld were inhabitants of Mars, who have been sent to earth for the purpose of securing one of its inhabitants. I feel safe in asserting that the stories being told by certain San Francisco attorneys are clumsy fakes, and should not be given credence by anyone." (14.)

While the Colonel's story sounds convincing it should be noted that the "visitors from Mars" concept was familiar to the times. Also, there was another influence at work, the folklore idea of a race of beings that lived in the sky in an aerial kingdom sometimes called "Magonia." (15.) That the myth was widely known is proved by a March 7, 1897, article in the Salt Lake Tribune (Salt Lake City, Utah) on page 5. In the Tribune

there was a mention of the Magonia belief under the title: "A Sea Above the Clouds—Extraordinary Superstition Once Prevalent In England." Elements of the Magonia belief would be clearly discernible in many airship landing stories that would appear in the press in the spring of 1897.

Another odd story was printed in the Stockton Evening Mail on January 22, 1897. It seems something was seen in the sky near the community of Acampo: "It seemed as big as a small house and looked as if it were built of canvas [?]. It went southeast." Still another report from Acampo that day describes an object that looked: ". . .like a cigar box with a spark of fire in it and afterwards seemed as if it was burning." The Mail also suggested that the strange asteroid it believed to be in orbit might have something to do with the following: ". . .scientists [?] at the Stockton High School report mysterious electrical disturbances there in the latricalmetromopical batteries. . . ." (16.)

Finally, on January 26th five Acampo residents were quoted as sighting an: ". . .aerial navigator [which] appeared to be a man with wings [?], having a fiery glow presumably from the reflection of some light carried with him." (17.)

About the time the last word was heard on the mysterious "California airship" in December, 1896, the sparsely populated range lands of central Nebraska became the new haunt of the sky ghost. Nebraskan opinion varied as stories reached Omaha about the strange lights seen in the sky over the rural areas to the west. Some supposed unusual atmospheric disturbances were responsible, while others guessed that the lights were probably artificial and controlled by a human agency.

From December, 1896, to February, 1897, reports of moving lights in the heavens over Nebraska continued to mount, yet many still attributed the sightings to "distorted imaginations and befogged fancies." One rumor which gained in popularity from day to day was that the world's first successful airship was being tested secretly under the cover of night, for many reports told of lights moving swiftly through the air after sundown.(18).

The Omaha Bee carried a news dispatch from Hastings, Nebraska, on February 2nd, telling of the presence of an "immense star" in the night sky. A short time afterward "airship sightings" came in from the Nebraskan towns of Inavale and York. Reports of strange lights then came in from Beatrice, North Platte, and Kearny. At Grand Island, Nebraska, witnesses reported a mystery light that shifted about in the heavens for over an hour. A sighting at Wymore, Nebraska, described a dazzling flying light that circled the town and then zoomed up and down. (19.)

On March 14th a mysterious glowing thing sailed into view over southern Omaha about 9:30 p.m., coming out of the southwest. The light floated to the west, and then to the north, before passing out of sight. It was visible for thirty minutes. A group of citizens on the way home from an evening church service saw the light. Among them was a Mr. J. J. Copenharve who testified:

> We thought at first it was a balloon. . .If there is such a thing as an airship, however, I believe now that it was one. There was a bright light, about a foot in diameter, and some of us who saw it thought we could distinguish some dark body below the light, but we might have been mistaken in that. (20.)

Railroad men working in the Omaha railroad yard said the light altered its course to a northwest heading before disappearing below the horizon. (21.)

The skylight excitement smoldered for about two weeks and then burst into full flame when massive sightings were reported at the end of March. A news dispatch from Topeka on the 28th said:

> Residents of a dozen or more northern Kansas towns are excited over the appearance of a strange light which has been seen in the western sky for several nights. Reports from some localities are that it is an immense ball of fire, while other observers say it resembles an airship.
>
> J. A. Rea of Belleville, reports that the light hovered over the city three-quarters of an hour Friday night and then moved rapidly away. It looked half the size of a locomotive headlight and was of a bluish tint.
>
> Last night hundreds of Bellville people watched for the light, and it appeared at 10 o'clock. This time the light was so strong that it reflected brightly through the windows. Several people who looked through a strong glass [telescope] claim they could distinguish the outline of an airship.
>
> About 8:30 last night a strange light appeared in the sky west of Topeka, evidently the one reported at Bellville. It was about the shape and twice the size of a man's hand and was blood red. It was traveling slowly in a northerly direction. It was in sight about half an hour and then disappeared with a flicker like a candle put out by the wind.
>
> Several hundred people witnessed the light from the State-House steps. Among them was Gov. John W. Leedy. He said: "That is a very strange light. I don't know what it is, but I hope it will solve the railroad problem. If it is an airship maybe it will."
>
> The light was also seen last night at Atchison, Hiawatha, Halton, Concordia, and elsewhere. (22).

On April 1st Kansas City, Kansas, succumbed to the airship affliction. According to a news dispatch from there:

> At 8 o'clock last night. . .the "strange lights" appeared in the sky south of. . .[the] city and caused the highest interest among the people. To those who saw the lights, all talk of Venus and other planets will not be listened to. As one man put it, Venus does not go

zig-zag and criss-cross along the horizon, as they declare this light does. (23).

A situation soon developed that was similar to the confusing airship flap in California the previous November. Numerous reports of moving lights in the night sky poured into the office of the nearest newspaper, and among such sightings there would always be someone who said he could see better than the rest, giving testimony that the thing was an airship with physical features closely resembling a drawing he recently had seen in an illustrated magazine. Newspaper editors, beset by so many puzzling reports, felt compelled to print something, so they readily printed almost any airship tale in the hopes it would help clear up the mystery.

One very interesting case on April 1st took place at Everest, Kansas:

> The whole town saw an object fly under the cloud ceiling. It came down slowly, then flew away very fast to the southeast. When directly over the town it swept the ground with its powerful light. It was seen to rise up at fantastic speed until barely discernible, then to come down again and sweep low over the witnesses. At one point it remained stationary for 5 minutes at the edge of a low cloud, which it illuminated. All could clearly see the silhouette of the craft. (24)

The 10th of April the mystery "airship" appeared over Chicago's southern suburbs. A reporter for the New York Herald found "comparatively few" witnesses who claimed to have seen anything clearly, but he interviewed a number of persons who had noticed the odd phenomenon make its Chicago appearance. The Herald reporter stated: "That there was 'something' in the northern sky there is no doubt, and it was a very curious 'something.' It seemed to come from the mists of the lake, and, moving westward, was in plain sight. . . ." (25.)

Of the various witnesses, the Herald only quoted a Chicago physician who strongly disputed any suggestion that the phenomenon was an atmospheric illusion:

> There was a perceptible undulation in its motion, and the dips succeeded one another at about the rhythm of a pulse beat. It moved very rapidly, and disappeared toward the northwest, near the horizon, vanishing by degrees. The colors—red, white, and green—exhibited were too distinct to have been the result of atmospheric refraction.
>
> We first noticed the object almost overhead, only a narrow arc intervening between it and the zenith. It bore away from us at a rate unmistakable for the ordinary movement of stars. I do not think it could have been a balloon, though I was not able to distinguish any form. I am willing to give the airship the benefit of the doubt." (26.)

It was also reported that the towns of Evanston, Niles Center,

and Schermerville, Illinois, had been visited by something in the sky carrying lights. Professor Hough of Dearborn Observatory at Northwestern University quickly advanced an explanation for the lights in the sky but it did not meet with many people's satisfaction. The professor claimed that mysterious lights in the night sky were due to the flickerings of those stars in the Orion constellation with their red and green hues, though he confessed he could not explain why those stars had only recently excited such great interest. (27.)

And then a hoax to top any of the other airship stories making the rounds turned up in the Dallas Morning News on April 19th, concerning the small community of Aurora, Texas. According to the news item citizens of Aurora had been startled at 6 o'clock in the morning of the 17th by a mysterious airship that had zoomed too low and crashed. The airship was said to have exploded, destroying both itself and a windmill. The story in the Morning News asserted that an examination of the body of the airship's pilot and some papers discovered in the wreckage which were covered with incomprehensible hieroglyphics, proved that the helmsman: ". . . was not an inhabitant of this world [!]." The news story claimed that one of the investigators of the crash had been an officer of the U.S. Signal Service by the name of T. J. Weems, who aired his belief that the destroyed machine and its pilot must have been from the planet Mars! (28.)

On April 22nd an incident nearly as fantastic as the Aurora one was supposed to have taken place at Le Roy, Kansas. There a Mr. Alexander Hamilton testified that a cigar-shaped craft had hovered over the cow lot behind his farmhouse the previous evening. According to Mr. Hamilton there was a carriage underneath the object which was: ". . .occupied by six of the strangest beings he ever saw." He claimed further that the strange beings had roped a two-year-old heifer and had succeeded in carrying off the animal. In true rustler fashion the crew of the alleged aerial craft discarded the hide of the cow with its identifying brand, for a cowskin with Mr. Hamilton's mark was said to have been found the following day four miles away. (29.)

Was Mr. Hamilton telling the truth? There doesn't seem to be any way of determining one way or another, although there appeared to be elements of the Magonia legend in Mr. Hamilton's story. One might also say that the impressive affidavit that accompanied Mr. Hamilton's report need not be taken too seriously, for similar affidavits were appearing in the papers to support airship tales that were obvious hoaxes. For an understanding of stories making the rounds during that summer back in 1897, one must study the newspapers and social climate with care. Why the "men from Mars" stories for example?

For one thing, telescopic investigation of the red planet Mars by Percival Lowell was then in progress and not a few believed that a thriving civilization would be discovered. Lowell thought that all that was needed to detect life on Mars was a big enough telescope in a prime location. Being a wealthy man he chose the best spot in the United States for telescopic viewing, a mountain near Flagstaff, Arizona, and financed the construction of a large

telescope. It was an expensive venture but Lowell was obsessed with the possibility that he might make an important discovery. (30.) Needless to say, the newspapers followed his project with great interest. Among the public amateur astronomy was one of the most popular of sciences, and of all the mysteries of the heavens none held more fascination than the possibility that there might be intelligent life on planet Mars. This natural fascination was intensified in 1897 because many men of science actually expected Percival Lowell to succeed in his avowed intention to discover a Martian civilization, for the information science had available at that time seemed to support such a possibility.

As for the idea that Martians might cross space to visit the earth, as alleged in the Aurora case and indicated in the Le Roy, Kansas, episode, it need not be considered too advanced for the Victorian mind. H. G. Wells' War of the Worlds was being serialized in Cosmopolitan magazine in the spring of 1897 and the serialization was being widely advertised in most leading newspapers.

Wells did not write his fictional novel of interplanetary war with the airship mystery in mind, and if his brother Frank had not suggested the idea, the gifted visionary may have never put pen to paper in regards to the subject. Once applied, however, the genius of Wells produced a science fiction classic. Wells saw a Martian invasion as a catastrophe that reveals the frailty of human civilization and all its pretentions, a final judgment rather than a purgative horror. This view of Victorian society appeared in other novels of the time, which attempted to frighten decadent Englishmen by conjuring up invasions of Frenchmen or Germans. It was the Martians as villains that made Wells' novel unique.

To introduce his war between worlds Wells used the following quotes from the writings of Johannes Kepler: "But who shall dwell in these worlds if they be inhabited? Are we or they Lords of the World? And how are all things made for man?

Yet as fascinating as the "men from Mars" idea was, there was no Martian invasion hysteria during the airship flap. The idea that someone had finally invented the first successful airship however, generated considerable enthusiasm.

In fact, news stories of airships landing, making repairs, and taking on water, were common, as were news stories of airships passing overhead and dropping newspapers, aluminum parts, garbage, and assorted messages. These stories were reported with such detail and with such strong assurances of veracity, that latter-day readers of the accounts tend to take the yarns at face value. One school of modern thought even maintains that aliens from off the earth disguised themselves and their craft to fit Victorian expectations of a conventional flying machine. Some knowledge of the uninhibited journalism of the Victorian era and a study of the contradictions in such accounts greatly weakens the hypothesis, but it has such an appeal it will probably persist for a long time.

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

By H. G. WELLS

I.

THE EVE OF THE WAR.

NO one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that human affairs were being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their affairs they were scrutinized and studied perhaps almost as closely as a man with a microscope might scrutinize the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. With infinite complacency men went to and fro over this little globe about their affairs, dreaming themselves the highest creatures in the whole vast universe, and serene in their assurance of their empire over matter. It is just possible that the *infusoria* under the microscope do the same. No one gave a thought to the older worlds of space, or thought of them only to dismiss the idea of life upon them as impossible or improbable. At most, terrestrial men fancied there might be other men upon Mars —probably inferior to themselves and ready to welcome a missionary enterprise. Yet, across the gulf of space, minds that are to our minds as ours are to the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew up their plans against us. And early in the twentieth century came the great disillusionment. The planet Mars, I may remind the reader, revolves about the sun at a mean distance of one hundred and forty million miles, and the light and heat it receives from the sun are scarcely half of that received by this world. It must be, if the nebular hypothesis has any truth, older than our world, and long before this earth ceased to be molten, life upon its

[Although Mr. Wells is a comparatively young man, his name has become, within a very few years, a familiar one in all English speaking lands. His books number a scant half dozen, yet they have achieved the widest reputation, not only because of the attractive style in which Mr. Wells clothes his brilliant imaginings, but also by reason of the underlying vein of philosophical suggestion. "The Time Machine," "The Wonderful Visit," "The Wheel of Chance," and "The Island of Dr. Moreau," are the stories upon which Mr. Wells' reputation is founded. The editor of THE COSMOPOLITAN hazards the opinion that "The War of the Worlds" will be regarded by the public as much in advance of any previous work of this author.—EDITOR.]

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While it is almost certain many persons were dreaming up the airship sightings, there were some cases that defy easy analysis. A case in point was the report by five witnesses at Jefferson, Illinois. One of the witnesses, Ward Smyers, testified:

> I must confess that I am puzzled to account for the appearance of the object we saw on any other grounds than that it is a flying machine. It did not act like a balloon, and it could not have been a meteor. (31)

A drawing made by Mr. Smyer showed a cigar-shaped object with lights on either end. There was no reference to wings, decks, cabins, or occupants, that characterized the usual airship yarn. Mr. Smyer went on to state:

> When we first saw it, it was coming from the northeast, and appeared to be about two miles away. It stopped while we were looking and began to descend rapidly until it was, I should say, within 1,000 feet of the earth, though still a long way from us in a horizontal plane.
>
> Trees along the Despiaines River obscured it at this time, but it soon came back into the field of vision. We then saw it distinctly veer around and turn east as a train turns a curve. Indeed, the light of the object,with the exception that it constantly changed color, was more like the headlight of a locomotive than anything else, having a steady glare and the appearance of a great fiery eye.
>
> While we were looking at it, it turned sharply and began to proceed rapidly south, at the same time going upward at a sharp angle. The ship proceeded steadily toward Dunning, with an even motion, very much unlike that of a balloon, and was soon lost to view. I may add that there was no breeze on the surface where we stood, I do not think there was an upper current. . . .(32.)

In New York the reality of the mysterious airship being reported all over the mid-West was intensely debated, particularly among rival newspapers with their enormous competitive proclivities. News of the controversy reached Paris through the New York Herald's European edition and French airship inventors, serious contenders in the race to be the first to build a true flying machine, became alarmed. (33.)

As it turned out, the airship hypothesis suffered a fatal setback on April 19th. On the forementioned date a Mr. B. Swearing said he had discovered a long reed sticking in the ground outside of the town of Astoria, Illinois. The reed had a long red and blue ribbon tied to it, as well as a three pound rock. Also attached was a packet containing a big soiled envelope addressed to Thomas Edison. The letter was opened but the text was in an unreadable cipher. The message was signed "C. L. Harris, Electrician, Air Ship No. 3." (34.)

The New York Herald believed the Astoria letter might be

genuine and carried a story about it in its April 16th edition. Edison was too busy to look at his real mail let alone letters of doubtful authenticity, but a Herald reporter managed to corner the great scientist in his laboratory, urging him to examine the Astoria message. The resulting interview was published in the Herald:

> "This is the latest, isn't it?" inquired he, leaning back in his chair and glancing over the letter a second time. "You can take it from me that this is a pure fake. I have had several men in my employ, but I know nothing of a C. L. Harris."
>
> Mr. Edison then grew more thoughtful and stated that he had no doubt that airships will be successfully constructed in the near future. In reference to the western "airship" he added: "—It is absolutely absurd to imagine that a man would construct a successful airship and keep the matter secret. When I was young we used to construct big colored balloons, inflate them with gas and they would float for days.
>
> "Whenever an airship is made it will not be in the form of a balloon. It will be a mechanical contrivance, which will be raised by means of a very powerful motor of little weight. At present no one has discovered such a motor, but we never know what will happen. We may wake up some morning and hear of some invention which sets us all eagerly to work within a few hours, as was the case with the Roentgen rays.
>
> "I am not, however, figuring on inventing an airship. I prefer to devote my time to objects which have commercial value. At best airships would be only toys." (35.)

The Edison interview brought speculation in New York newspapers more or less to a close, since the great Jehovah of inventing had spoken and the airship idea was found wanting.

After the airship sightings peaked, lecturers, many assuming the title "Professor," toured the middle west, speaking to packed houses on the theory of powered flight, or about atmospheric arcana

Reports of airships and strange lights sailing in the heavens tapered off toward the end of April so the New York dailies turned their attention to other controversies.

In the field of literature the popularity of H. G. Wells' novel War of the Worlds began to grow so William Heinemann, the London publishing house, made plans to bring the serialized work out in hardback. William R. Hearst, the young dynamic editor of the New York Journal-American, sensed the impact of the Martian invasion theme and employed the popular science writer Garrett P. Serviss to produce a sequel to Wells' original idea. Accepting the challenge Serviss thrilled the readership of the Journal-American with the tale "Edison's Conquest of Mars" in the spring of 1898, just after the termination of the Well's serial in the December issue of the Cosmopolitan. Serviss' story was about a

counterattack by the scientists of earth in answer to aggression from the red planet named after the god of war. A fleet of spaceships, wingless, portholed, cigar-shaped missiles, captained by mankind's chief scientist, Thomas Edison, are pictured zooming out of space and laying waste to the hostile Martian globe with disintegrator rays. Like Wells' novel, Serviss' story was quite ahead of its time.

It's conceivable that the airship sightings had been, to a great extent, a psychological phenomenon, an excitement that had received its start in California in November, 1896, and then slowly worked its way east. Considering some of the more far out stories that appeared in the press, its difficult not to believe that many airship tales had been the result of snowballing publicity, yet there were two series of sightings that seem to have been independent of both the November, 1896, UFO flap, and the wave of reports over the midwest, from February to April, in 1897.

In the early summer of 1896 the Swedish government notified Canadian authorities that a Swedish scientist, professor Salomon A. Andree, would attempt to cross over the top of the world in a free balloon, leaving from a base in northern Norway. It was hoped the professor would land somewhere in Canada. The Canadian government agreed to help and alerted its Indian agents in that nation's northern territories in the belief that the various tribes living in the Artic areas would most likely be the first to encounter professor Andree if his balloon trip met with success.

Professor Andree's attempt to reach the North Pole was not made in 1896. Because of various difficulties his trip was postponed until the following year. The professor lost his life in 1897 when his balloon came down on a small Russian island a short distance from northern Norway. Stranded, he and two companions had died from the cold. However, the fate of the Andree party is only important to us in that we know for a fact that no balloon should have been over northern Canada in 1896 or 1897.

On July 1, 1896, something was reported in the sky over Winnipeg, Canada. People who had not seen the object were skeptical of what was termed a "ghostly balloon" in Winnipeg skies, believing that witnesses of the phenomenon were suffering from "overheated imaginations." (36.)

However, on July 3rd, Canadian Indian agent R. E. Loring, stationed at Hazelton, British Columbia, some 450 miles north of Victoria,sent a message to the superintendent of Indian affairs, Mr. A. W. Vawell. Mr. Loring wrote that a young Indian had seen a strange object in the sky about 7:30 p.m. that day some four miles to the west of Hazelton. The youth said he had seen the object emerge from a thick, white, cloud bank, and then swerve in a semi-circular course through a rift in the overcast before entering another cloud bank. The object flew about 400 feet above the mountains and appeared dark in color. Such was the extent of details given in Mr. Loring's letter. Since the report came from a young Indian boy, agent Loring was not overly impressed but he

notified his superior, Mr. Vawell, nonetheless. (37.)

And then, on July 10th, a hunting party of Kitapiox Indians led by their paramount chief, chief Ghail, returned to Hazelton from a hunting expedition along the shores of Black Water Lake. Chief Ghail, known to agent Loring as a trustworthy person, reported to the Indian affairs office in Hazelton, saying he had an extraordinary story to relate. The chief said he and some of his warriors had spotted what must have been professor Andree's balloon, because they had seen something in the sky while they were at the lake, displaying very bright lights and moving in a northerly direction. "When!" asked agent Loring. Chief Ghail replied: "the evening of July 3rd." (38.)

Almost exactly a year later, in July, 1897, after UFO reports in the United States had died out, something strange returned to haunt Canadian skies. Newspapers in the region with which we are now concerned, British Columbia, had paid almost no attention to the "airship excitement" that had taken place south of the border that summer and the previous autumn.

About the first of July two men employed at the Victoria Electric Light Company saw a luminous body rising slowly in the eastern sky early in the morning. (39.) The report might have been dismissed as a star or a planet but for something that had happened on July 10th. On the forementioned date, a Mr. W. S. Fitzgerald and a friend were camped out at River's Inlet, just north of the entrance to Queen Charlotte Sound. Around 2:45 in the morning both men were still awake and they happened to notice a light in the heavens over a high mountain near the mouth of the inlet. At first it looked like a tree on fire, but the fiery looking light was too high in the air. Besides that, the point of light was moving. The sky was darker than usual because of an overcast and when the flying light was first seen it had just emerged from a rift in the clouds. Other than the strong light, they soon discerned a: ". . .pear-shaped body. . . [which was]. . .rendered luminous by the reflection of the light attached to it." Fitzgerald testified:

> We determined to watch its progress and saw it pass through rift after rift in the clouds. It was evidently moving in a different atmosphere, or currents of air, than we felt below at this time, for whereas on the water there was a nasty, squally wind blowing, it seemed to glide majestically along without so much as a tremor.(40.)

Both Fitzgerald and his friend watched the object finally disappear behind a dark mass of clouds, the outline of the pear-shaped body growing dim until only a point of light was visible. It was noted that the object moved so slowly it took over an hour to pass overhead. Had it been a fire balloon? Perhaps, but sending fire balloons aloft in British Columbia over forested areas was a serious crime.

The editor of the Victoria Semi-Weekly Colonist dropped a tantalizing clue to what might be a fruitful area of research:

"Is this a second visit of the great bird with the eye of fire, which the Bella Coola [Indian] legends tell us sat upon the mountains before the great Winter came?" (41.)

Two days later, at Kamloops, British Columbia, a town about 275 miles southeast of Rivers Inlet, an old gentleman at the local old folks home got out of bed at about 2 o'clock to take some medicine. Glancing out the window he spotted: ". . .a huge globe of fire rising above the hill east of the Industrial School, which upon looking through his window more attentively, seemed to expand and flutter from side to side, but still kept rising to a great height and advancing to the southwest, and at intervals streaks of light would dart out to the sides." The old gentleman aroused his neighbors and a crowd soon gathered outside the rest home to watch the light rise higher in the sky and eventually disappear in the southwest two hours later. (42.)

About the first of August the mysterious "fire balloon" was spotted by some women near Victoria. The glowing object appeared to be over Salt Springs Island moving slowly northward. The thing was described as: ". . .red column of fire apparently 50 feet long [?]." (43.)

Sunday, August lst, around 2 o'clock in the morning, three men near the community of Goldstream, British Columbia, saw a point of light rise from the top of Mount Skirt and then move to the northwest, passing over the Goldstream railway station. The men said: ". . .light was the color of an electric light, and . . .[it] was steady, throwing out rays." Furthermore: "It was not very high. . .[and] was not affected by the wind." (44.)

When the mystery light appeared in the sky in the Strait of Georgia region, on August 8th, the editor of the Victoria Colonist tried to pass off the sighting as a reflection from a fire at the town of Corodova. This resulted in a number of letters from irate readers. A Mr. Sharpe Wilson said he had seen the mystery light floating: ". . .high in the sky, diffusing a dazzling radiance." (45.) He further stated that he had witnessed the sight at Coal City, which voided the carefully constructed explanation proposed by the editor of the Colonist. Another gentleman, Mr. E. S. Shrapnel, wrote that he had watched the brilliant light for two hours hovering over Mary Todd island:". . . swaying from side to side slowly, and sometimes rising and falling in a similar manner." He asserted that: ". . .it was decidedly no reflection being quite as bright, if not brighter, than the numerous stars in view." (46.)

Monday, August 9th, Reeve Schou and other passengers on the steamer Rithet plying the waters of the Strait of Georgia, saw what appeared to be a very bright red "star" surrounded by a luminous, cigar-shaped, halo. The thing moved slowly, maintaining a constant altitude above the water and: ". . .occasionally there seemed to drop from the bright red star a shower of sparks . . ."(47.)

Probably the best sighting of the series came out of Rossland, British Columbia, near the American border, far to the east of Victoria:

> Rossland, Aug. 12—A luminous ball of fire that glowed amidst a halo of variegated colors, hovered over Rossland for a time last evening and was seen by several well known citizens, among whom were: Major Cooper, J. Wilson, Magistrate Jordon, Andy Revabeck, Alderman Fraser, Inspector Barr and others. When first observed it was hull down on the horizon, but approached with the swiftness of light [?], and after hovering for over a quarter of an hour poised in mid-sir, surrounding itself the while with flashes of colors, it streaked off in a southerly direction and soon faded from sight. At first it was supposed to be a shooting star, but as it approached nearer it gleamed like a great ball of fire and poised itself directly above Red Mountain, although the moon shone quite brightly it did not seem to dull the luster of the stranger. Those who were watching saw a weird sight. Little particles of fire seemed to shoot out from the main ball and then a flash of red followed. It looked for all the world like a lighthouse with a revolving flashlight of colors. No doubt if it had been dark enough the thing could have been observed more closely, but as it was, it was a sight never to be forgotten.
>
> After showing its respects to Rossland, the wonder made several wide circles, like a bird undecided what course to pursue, and then struck an air line and passed rapidly away towards the south. (48.)

Nine o'clock the evening of the 13th the "mysterious luminous body," as the press liked to call the phantom light, was seen by thousands of people in Vancouver. The object traveled: ". . . with tremendous rapidity low down on the horizon, just skimming the mountain tops in the southern sky." Also, the object flew: ". . .with a slightly rising and falling motion. . .[and was] brilliant red in the center and surrounded by a luminous diaphanous mist." (49.)

Back in the United States the airship mystery might have come to nothing if the editor of the New York World had not sent a couple of reporters to interview the prominent New Yorker John Jacob Astor.

Mr. Astor's enormous wealth made possible a very vigorous life style and being blessed with a healthy body and an active mind, he was equal to the opportunities money provided. During the Spanish-American War, for example, Mr. Astor would organize a complete battery of artillery, equip it at his own expense, and personally lead the unit into battle. However, such was his adventurous spirit, he envisioned places and events offering challenges far exceeding those of the Victorian era. He dreamed of the year 2001 when a trio of scientists might leave earth and speed toward the giant planet Jupiter in a craft utilizing an anti-gravity substance he called "epergy." The imagined voyage was written and published by the rich New Yorker in 1894, and perhaps largely forgotten by Astor until the two reporters from the New York World showed up on his doorstep.

The newspapermen mentioned the spaceship "Callisto" in Astor's futuristic novel, A Journey In Other Worlds, and compared the prophetized craft with the reports of similar bullet-shaped machines that had been reported in the skies over the West. Mr. Astor said:

> I hope the reports from the West that an airship has been seen in practical operation may be verified. I know nothing of the matter except what has been printed in the newspapers, and, of course, no definite conclusion can be reached from the rather hazy data so far secured. (50.)

Keeping a close watch on the airship controversy in the New York newspapers was a shy, heavyset, young man in his early twenties, a writer who contributed feature articles to metropolitan dailies, by the name of Charles Fort. Fort was intrigued by the Astor interview in the World.

Fort obtained a copy of Astor's novel and enjoyed reading the story about travel in space and of exotic inhabitants of alien worlds. But what is most important, Fort read and pondered the preface to the story by Astor. Mr. Astor had written in the preface that not enough attention was being given to much of the mysterious phenomena found in nature. The millionaire author suggested that there was a need for written material devoted completely to what baffles science, proposing that someone should explore: ". . .little trodden paths." (51.) Inspired, Charles Fort set out to do just that, and with a cosmic viewpoint.

In 1897 the main interest of the public and the New York newspapers was the increasing excitement over Cuba which would eventually lead to war with Spain by February of the following year. Many Americans, drunk with nationalism, had acquired a taste for wide-flung dominion, while others, imbued with anti-imperialism, strongly opposed war as an "abominable business." The limit of the universe for most Americans at that time was typified by the lecturing of Captain Mahan who preached strategic military defense by demanding the annexation of Hawaii.

Charles Fort, however, daydreamed instead about the stars, and civilizations in the heavens as yet undiscovered.

In that vanished world of the nineties, both sumptuous and outrageous, it was appropriate that the debut of Richard Strauss' superlative Also Sprach Zarathustra should coincide with the advent of Fort's cosmic viewpoint. It was the Zarathustra's musical sunrise, meant to convey the dawning of a new phase in mankind's intellectual evolution, that made it so suitable for the occasion: "Trumpets sounded the opening, swelling into an immense orchestral paean." (52.)

Chapter Two

The Madbrained Genius

Born August 9, 1874, Charles Fort was one of three sons of an Albany, New York, businessman, a Victorian father whose word was the law in the family. Charles rebelled against the harsh discipline and that was probably the reason he craved excitement tinged with irreverence. In later years it would mean trouble for the Sacred Cow of science.

For Charles and his brothers, games of imagination had to do because of the lack of ready-made ones modern youths enjoy, a particular favorite being one patterned after the historic Guy Fawkes "Gunpowder Plot," England's equivalent to America's Fourth of July. One likes to imagine good old Charlie still playing the game to the hilt, tunneled under our civilization and surrounded by kegs of explosive data.

In school Fort preferred to give comic speeches to turning out impeccable test papers, yet he was no fool and showed an early talent for taking accurate notes on his surroundings. This eventually led to a position on the staff of the Albany Democrat as a cub reporter.

About 1892 Fort took off and traveled thirty thousand miles all around the world, subsisting on a slim legacy willed to him, riding the rails and sleeping in the open under the stars. Practically a tramp, Fort nonetheless soaked up a vast store of experiences and information.

In 1896 Fort settled down in New York and his life gained some direction and stability. Although his future seemed to be in straight news reporting, Fort's spirit of independence prompted forays by him into more expressive writing: short stories, feature articles, and novels.

Fort got married in 1896 and was hard pressed for a while to make a living, existing on the edge of poverty for years. Trapped by finances in a Bronx clapboard tenement amid the noisy clamor of a slum, Fort nevertheless managed to keep his clownish outlook on life, for his early writings were warm accounts of his rundown neighborhood. His literary output had to bring in the groceries, so expediency kept a brake on any unconventional leanings. Even so, at times, the furniture had to be broken up to keep the family hearth supplied in the winter.

Seeking "little trodden paths" Fort found time to thumb through bound volumes of scientific journals at the huge New York Public Library, keeping an eye out for strange facts that science might have ignored. Amazingly there were many such items, hundreds and hundreds that hitherto had been treated as bizarre isolated cases. Jotting notes as he went, Fort slowly developed what he called a haunting, taunting, awareness that the odd fragments of data were falling into some kind of relationship. (1)

A typical head-scratcher he found was the story about the phantom companion of the cloud-veiled planet of Venus. In 1645, Fort learned, by consulting an astronomy text, that a large, unexplained body was seen by telescope near the Cytherean world even

though science was sure the second planet out from the sun had no lunar attendant. Astronomers Cassini and Short, each using an array of optical instruments and eyepieces, checked and double checked, before notifying their colleagues. A scientist named Mantaigne reported a similar satellite four times during the first week of May, 1761, and even described the object as presenting a phase. Observers Rodkier and Horrebow concurred with other observers of the "new discovery" after searches with their own telescopes in the month of March, 1764.

Another student of the night sky, Montbaron, followed up with three more visual confirmations the latter part of the same month. Finally, planetary expert, Scheuten, claimed that he had checked the Venusian transit of the sun in 1761 and had detected the alleged luminary of the Cytherean night tagging along with its parent orb. M. Baudowin utilized Montaigne's observations of the phase of the supposed Venusian moon and calculated a diameter of 2,000 miles. The celestial authority Houzeau even went so far as to christen the new found sphere "Neith," however after the year 1767 this tiny world was never seen again.

Richard Proctor, a sober scientific author, wrote in his survey of the heavens, Other Worlds Than Ours (1897), that the peek-a-boo episode with the elusive, and now totally vanished, Venusian moon was: ". . .one of the most perplexing enigmas that has ever been presented to astronomers." (2.)

Charles Fort regarded the same rogue morsel, and no doubt with a bellow and roar, penciled the blasphemous oddment on some foolscap. Fort adjusted his intellectual bifocals and discerned a "Super-construction" as responsible for the cosmic prestidigitation. By a "super-construction" he meant a vessel of sorts from a super-Rome.

A lesser known bit of esoteric was taken out of the Annual Register by Fort, concerning a M. DeRostan, a Paris based astronomer, who was giving his attention to the Sun's disk on August 9, 1762, when a vast spindle-shaped form became noticeable by its eclipsing a portion of the solar limb. For a month DeRostan tracked the black profile's progress as its tortoise drift eventually moved it off the Sun's face. No other scientific observer recorded this quasi-datum like the mysterious moon "Neith," save for an interesting exception. A German astronomer many miles from Paris had set down his own daily account of the opaque spindle's traverse of the Sun's disk. An exchange of notes between the two observers on the phenomenon, which at first glance seemed to have been an unusual sunspot, showed that the German diagrammed a different path than the Frenchmen, which indicated, because of parallax, the solar blemish must have been cruising in space, pacing the earth. What's more, M. DeRostan believed he discerned a nebulosity around the weird shape. Fort pondered the story and suggested one should credit the misty penumbra to an atmosphere and the umbra to a super-zeppelin, while he smiled and named the whole thing: "Monstrator." In Fort's mind something was out there, something had dropped anchor. (3.)

In Fort's research work there are many references to luminous bodies moving through the air and not all flew high in the sky.

On July 30, 1880, three flying lights silently investigated a ravine near St. Petersberg (Leningrad), Russia. The phenomenon, which lasted three minutes, found its way into a French scientific journal where Fort ran across it. (4.)

Another striking episode was chronicled in the French publications Ceuvres(11-576) and Annals de Chimie (30-417). It took place in the skies over Embrun, France, on September 7, 1820. An eclipse was in progress and people were giving their full attention to the heavens. According to witnesses strange bodies were noticed flying about in the sky, moving with the precision of soldiers on parade. The case is one of Fort's more intriguing finds. (5.)

In the publication Nature, Fort learned, it says that in 1893, sailors aboard the ships: Caroline and Leander witnessed a strange phenomenon in the sky as their ships sailed a sea lane through the East China Sea in the month of February. Luminous globe-like objects flew alongside the Caroline, pacing the ship for two hours. The crew of the Caroline was persuaded the things were not ethereal when the lights were mirrored in the water and were seen to pass behind an island, both improbable feats for a hallucination. The H.M.S. Leander came across the same glowing globes soon after the Caroline had left the area. The Leander's bold Captain, a gentleman named Castle, turned his ship and aimed his vessel right at the odd lights. The glowing objects, milling around close together and occasionally trailing out in a single line like a tail on a kite, recoiled from the Leander's charge and rose far out of reach. (6.)

One of Fort's favorite sources, the English Mechanic, received an account from Stockholm about a strange red colored light in the sky, oblong in shape, that explored the heavens over Sweden for ten hours on the 8th of February, 1892. The sight was termed by Swedish observers an extraordinary spectacle. (7.)

This brings us up to the mid-1890s when the big airship flap occurred in California, an excitement that worked its way east, where Fort was following the controversy in the New York newspapers. With his discerning mind Fort pondered the exaggerations in William Randolph Hearst's Journal-American and the scoffing of Northwestern University's Professor Hough, who proposed that the mystery lights were due to the Orion Constellation seen under unusual atmospheric conditions. Fort took notes and then put them aside for future reference.

The end of the American airship flap did not mean an end to strange things seen in the heavens.

On September 15, 1901, a Mr. Benette, Justice of the Peace in the French village of Herbignac, let his gaze wander over the evening sky decorated with scattered clouds. He soon noticed an unusual "star" that slowly pulsated, matching a first magnitude star at its brightest. After calling for his wife to witness the sight, something like a searchlight beam became visible illuminating the clouds in the vicinity of the phenomenon. The French publication The Bulletin de la Societe Astronomique, later printed a letter from Mr. Benette describing the entire incident. (8.)

It was considered somewhat curious by Charles Fort when he

found news accounts in the Melbourne Leader and the Sydney Herald reporting a series of spectacular meteors in Australian skies over a period of ten days, November 13th to November 23rd, 1902. The meteor activity seemed to be localized which was an oddity that captivated Fort's imagination. One of the meteor reports in particular, made by Sir Charles Todd of Adelaide Observatory, fascinated Fort. Sir Todd stated that one fireball took four minutes to cross the sky. (9.)

Even stranger, perhaps startling is a better word, was the testimony of three men, the lookout, helmsman, and the second officer, of the steamship Fort Salisbury, who all reported seeing something huge in the sea at Lat. 5° 31' South and Long. 4° 42' West, on October 28, 1902. It was very early in the morning, after 3 a.m., when the ship passed a 500 foot long bulk, slowly submerging. The mysterious giant displayed two lights and was disturbing the water a great deal. The incident was recorded in the ship's log and second officer A. H. Raymer's story of the encounter was later printed by the journal Zoologist. As Charles Fort points out, the thing may have been a ship that had met with some sort of misadventure, turning turtle before sinking to its watery grave, yet he found no record of such a disaster in Loyd's List. (10.)

There is little mystery why the strange kind of material as that collected by Charles Fort went unrecognized as potentially important to science. For example, the Scientific American magazine even derided the idea of heavier-than-air flying machines as late as January, 1906, a full two years after the first successful trials by the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk.

As for things falling out of the sky, even conventional meteorites were considered pure nonsense as late as the mid-1800s. The famous astronomer Camile Flammarion wrote:

> A rather curious fact is that, although the ancient traditions, the histories of antiquity and of the Middle Ages, and the popular beliefs, had distinctly spoken of stones fallen from the sky, stones of the air, aerolites, the savants would not believe in them. Either they denied the fact itself, or they interpreted it quite otherwise, regarding the stones fallen on the earth as shot out by volcanic eruptions, raised from the ground by waterspouts, or even produced by certain condensations of matter in the midst of the atmosphere. (11.)

One wonders with considerable fascination what Fort's contemporaries thought of his search for mysterious information, his neighbors, relatives, or perhaps the librarians. He must surely have been considered a crank, but from all indications he kept to himself and was spared ridicule.

If he was criticized, it did not intimidate him, for he kept busy brooming off cobwebbed incongruities for decades. When his library searches pulled abreast of current events, Fort still found a little occurring every year to keep occupied recording, comparing, and speculating.

February 24, 1904, American Naval personnel aboard the U.S.S. Supply noticed three red colored lights in the sky just below a layer of clouds. The lights flew toward the ships, gaining altitude as they approached. As the lights soared higher and higher, quickly passing through the layer of scattered clouds which had provided a temporary backdrop, the men of the U.S.S. Supply observed that each light was a glowing body of different size. The largest appeared to be six times the size of the sun and had the profile of an egg. The second largest object was about double the size of the sun and the third object about equal. The "meteors," as they were assumed to be, were so remarkable special mention was given the sighting in the March, 1904, issue of the Monthly Weather Review. (12.)

There were two series of European UFO reports in 1903 and 1905. Charles Fort examined both English and French sources and his account of the sightings makes for interesting reading. He noted that in 1903 reports of unexplained, red-colored, star-like, bodies were made at Marseilles, France, on March 1st and 3rd; over Agenteuil, France, August 9th; and over Chatou, France, July 19th and 26th. (13.)

Two years later more sightings of something strange in the heavens were made at Cardiff, England, on March 29th, and in the sky over Tunis, North Africa, on April 9th. Also, a mysterious glowing object hovered in the sky over Cherbourg, France, every night from April 1st to April 11th. A modern day UFO researcher can read with some amusement about the behavior of the famous French astronomer Camille Flammarion, who denounced reports which claimed that the Cherbourg light danced about in the night sky. Flammarion declared that people were seeing the planet Venus and that any reported movements were illusions. Even the fact that Venus was below the horizon when the mystery light was seen didn't seem to faze the professor. The French celestial authority blasted the gullible public at least twice, despite the fact, as the editor of the journal Cosmos pointed out, that neither the Meteorological Bureau or the Observatory of Paris had sent representatives to Cherbourg to check out the reports. Flammarion, who was so quick to admonish his fellow savant's failure to understand meteors, was himself guilty of misapplying his cerebral abilities, by staying away from Cherbourg.

Fort gives two descriptions of the mystery object which contain detail. Both apparently are direct quotes lifted from French newspapers. One states that the mystery object, upon close examination, appeared to be a: ". . .long cluster of stars, obscured by a thin film or mist. . . ." Another said the object was: ". . .like an iron bar, heated to an orange-colored glow, and suspended vertically." (14.) This last report sounded like that description mentioned in a report made on August 1, 1897, near Victoria, British Columbia, listed in Chapter One.

Some strange aerial phenomena was reported in Wales in February, 1905, but Fort did not write about it in much detail. (15.) Here is what a reporter from the London Daily Mail had to say after his newspaper sent him to Wales to investigate:

> I saw what appeared to be a ball of fire above the roof of the chapel. It came from nowhere and sprang into existence instantaneously. It seemed to be about twice the height of the chapel, about fifty feet. Suddenly it disappeared, after having lasted a minute and a half. (16.)

About a quarter of an hour later the reporter spotted another appearance of the phenomena:

> . . .two lights flared out, one on each side of the chapel. I made a rough guess that they were a hundred feet above the roof of the chapel. They shone brilliantly for thirty seconds and then began to flicker. (17.)

March 23rd a Reverend Jones told the Barmouth, Wales, Advertiser, one of the mysterious lights showed an interest in his automobile:

> After proceeding some distance the mysterious light suddenly appeared in the roadway a few yards in front of the car, around which it played, sometimes in front, others behind. When we reached the crossroads the road toward Egryn makes a sudden turn to the left and, on reaching this point, instead of proceeding straight on, the light at once made its way in the direction of Egryn in front of the car. Up till then it had been a single light but here it changed. After going some little distance up the road to Egryn a small red ball of fire appeared around which danced two attendant white lights, playing around it. Meanwhile the car proceeded on its journey, leaving the lights behind. Those then suddenly again combined in one and rushed at a rapid pace after the car, which it then overtook. For over a mile we kept it in view. (18.)

By this time, around 1905, Charles Fort had done a lot of thinking about the strange material he had accumulated.

Chapter Three

A Book About the Damned

The famed American author Theodore Dreiser is best known for his literary achievements such as Sister Carrie, The "Genius," and An American Tragedy, but he could claim another, rather unique, distinction. Charles Fort had only two close friends and Dreiser was one of them.

Dreiser had a brilliant mind but he also had a personality riddled with grotesqueries which often resulted in behavior that was unpredictable and childish. He was also fascinated with the bizarre, and aside from being something of a maverick himself, Dreiser possessed two other things that would prove beneficial to Charles Fort's writing career: a position of literary success that gave him leverage with book publishers, and a stormy temperament that would not always take no for an answer.

In 1905 Dreiser took over the editorship of Smith's Magazine and was casting about for interesting manuscripts when a few appeared written by a fellow named Charles Fort. Dreiser immediately noticed the extraordinary wit and perception in essays submitted by Fort, so believing the eccentric Bronx author would make it big one day he felt it would prove profitable and entertaining to cultivate the unusual thinker's acquaintance. (1) As time went on Dreiser liked to tell his editor friends of the other shaggy pulps what rare abilities were laten in the, as yet unknown, freelancer he had discovered.

Fort tried to live up to Dreiser's expectations and scribbled over 3-1/2 million words worth of novels of stylistic quality, but the manuscripts lacked significant themes. (2.)

Fort, a timid, heavyset, fellow, peering at the world through thick glasses, never quite meshed gears with society. Withdrawn, he turned to his own peculiar world for satisfaction. Further inheritance boosted his income to a level where he did not really have to write for a living, so he read and wrote what he pleased all day long and attended the movies with his wife, Anna, almost every evening.

Still prodded by the words of John Jacob Astor, Fort continued to take notes on "mysterious forces and influences," patterns of orphaned freaks of data. After a while he dashed off two purely fictional manuscripts, indirectly inspired by the weird material he had so far gathered, titled "X" and "Y." Fort did not think too highly of the works and eventually threw them into the fireplace. Before they were burned Dreiser tried to peddle the two manuscripts to publishers, but found no takers. (3.)

However, another idea took hold in Fort's mind. He began to toy with the thought of using the odd facts he had accumulated for the nucleus of a non-fiction work, sewn together with his commentary on the importance of the information and the reception the scientific outcasts had so far received. Drieser was saddened by the destruction of manuscript X, his favorite, but received assurances from Fort who said that a new book he was planning would

as meteorologists can do nothing better than to secure for the whole earth the longest and most homogeneous series of observations possible.—*C. A.*

A POSSIBLE CASE OF BALL LIGHTNING.

By WILLIAM H. ALEXANDER, Local Forecaster. Dated Burlington, Vt., August 13, 1907.

During the month of July, 1907, the weather in the Champlain Valley, if not in the entire State of Vermont, was characterized by several interesting (not to say abnormal) features. Perhaps the most prominent feature was the large number of violent, and in many cases destructive, thunderstorms that occurred. A considerable number of lives was lost and much valuable property destroyed by lightning. Without doubt one of the most singular, certainly one of the most unusual, electrical phenomena known to the writer occurred at Burlington on the 2d, incident to the passage of a barometric depression from the Lake region to the lower St. Lawrence Valley during the last days of June and the first days of July. The distinctive feature of this storm was the single peal of thunder or explosion attended by what is believed to have been a case of "ball" or "globe" lightning. The "explosion" was so sudden, so unexpected, and so terrific that it startled practically the entire city, and there was a general, spontaneous rush to the window or street to see what had happened.

Effort has been made to obtain from eyewitnesses all observed details of importance relative to the phenomenon, but it appears that altho all heard the sound only a few actually saw anything. Fortunately, however, there were competent and reliable witnesses whose statements are given below in their own words.

Bishop John S. Michaud says:

I was standing on the corner of Church and College streets just in front of the Howard Bank and facing east, engaged in conversation with Ex-Governor Woodbury and Mr. A. A. Buell, when, without the slightest indication or warning, we were startled by what sounded like a most unusual and terrific explosion, evidently very near by. Raising my eyes and looking eastward along College street, I observed a torpedo-shaped body some 300 feet away, stationary in appearance and suspended in the air about 50 feet above the tops of the buildings. In size, it was about 6 feet long by 8 inches in diameter, the shell or cover having a dark appearance, with here and there tongues of fire issuing from spots on the surface resembling red-hot unburnished copper. Altho stationary when first noticed this object soon began to move, rather slowly, and disappeared over Dolan Brothers' store, southward. As it moved, the covering seemed rupturing in places and thru these the intensely red flames issued. My first impression was that it was some explosive shot from the upper portion of the Hall furniture store. When first seen it was surrounded by a halo of dim light, some 20 feet in diameter. There was no odor that I am aware of perceptible after the disappearance of the phenomenon, nor was there any damage done so far as known to me. Altho the sky was entirely clear overhead, there was an angry-looking cumulo-nimbus cloud approaching from the northwest; otherwise there was absolutely nothing to lead us to expect anything so remarkable. And, strange to say, altho the downpour of rain following this phenomenon, perhaps twenty minutes later, lasted at least half an hour, there was no indication of any other flash of lightning or sound of thunder.

Four weeks have past since the occurrence of this event, but the picture of that scene and the terrific concussion caused by it are vividly before me, while the crashing sound still rings in my ears. I hope I may never hear or see a similar phenomenon, at least at such close range.

Mr. Alvaro Adsit says:

I was standing in my store door facing the north; my attention was attracted by this "ball of fire" apparently descending toward a point on the opposite side of the street in front of the Hall furniture store; when within 18 or 20 feet of the ground the ball exploded with a deafening sound; the ball, before the explosion, was apparently 8 or 10 inches in diameter; the halo of light resulting from the explosion was 8 or 10 feet in diameter; the light had a yellowish tinge, somewhat like a candle light; no noise or sound was heard before or after the explosion; no damage was done so far as known to me.

Mr. W. P. Dodds (who was on the south side of the street, in the office of the Equitable Life Insurance Co.) says:

I saw the "ball" just before the explosion; it was moving apparently from the northwest (over the Howard Bank Building) and gradually descending; did not see it at the moment of the explosion, or afterward; no damage resulted so far as known to me.

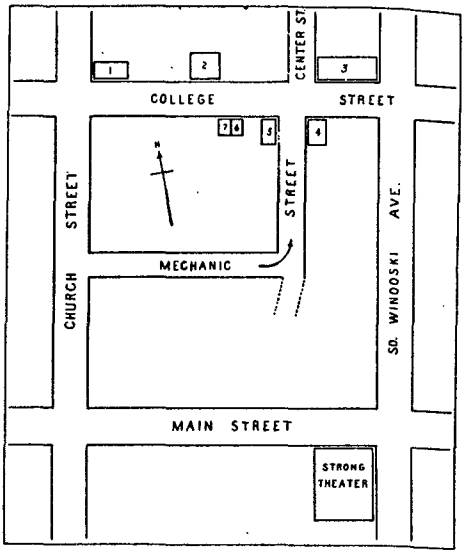

FIG. 1.—Plan of small section of Burlington, Vt., drawn (not to exact scale) to show roughly the several places mentioned in connection with the electric phenomenon of July 2, 1907. 1. Howard National Bank. 2. National Biscuit Company. 3. Hall's Furniture Company. 4. Ferguson & Adsit's store. 5. Dolan Brothers. 6. Equitable Life Insurance Company. 7. Standard Coal and Ice Company.

The following account is taken from the Burlington Daily Free Press of July 3, 1907:

A forerunner to one of the series of heavy and frequent thunderstorms that have characterized the early summer in this vicinity startled Burlingtonians yesterday just before noon. Without any preliminary disturbance of the atmosphere, there was a sharp report, the like of which is seldom heard. It was much louder in the business section of the city than elsewhere, and particularly in the vicinity of Church and College streets. People rushed to the street or to windows to learn what had happened, and when a horse was seen flat in the street in front of the Standard Coal and Ice Company's office it was the general impression that the animal had been struck by lightning and killed. This theory was not long entertained, as the horse was soon struggling to regain his feet. * * *

Ex-Governor Woodbury and Bishop Michaud were standing on the corner of Church and College streets in conversation when the report startled them. In talking with a Free Press man later in the day Governor Woodbury said his first thought was that an explosion had occurred somewhere in the immediate vicinity, and he turned, expecting to see bricks flying thru the air. Bishop Michaud was facing the east and saw a ball of fire rushing thru the air, apparently just east of the National Biscuit Company's building. Alvaro Adsit also saw the ball of fire, as did a young man who was looking out of a window in the Strong Theater Building. Another man with a vivid imagination declared that the ball struck the center of College street near the Standard Coal and Ice Company's office, knocked the horse down by the jar and then bounded up again to some undefined point in the sky. * * * The unusual disturbance was followed in a few minutes by a downpour of rain, which continued, with brief interruption, for nearly two hours.

Another described the sound as "like the tearing of new cambric". All agree that it was the most startling phenomenon of the kind ever experienced, because so unexpected.[1] The "explosion" was followed in a few minutes by a heavy

[1] This "ball of fire" may have been a distant meteor, and it will be worth while to seek for observations by distant observers about noon, Tuesday, July 2, 1907.—EDITOR.

be more worthy of Drieser's interest.

By 1908 the makings of a new wave of UFO reports was shaping up and Fort kept a close watch on the newspapers. Two early events, however, took place beyond the reach of the New York dailies. Out west in the heavens over the state of Washington one night early in the month of February a bright point of light was seen to move about attracting the attention of those persons living just north of Tacoma. The local press reported:

> . . .[a] mysterious flying object described as three times as bright as the planet Jupiter, displaying colors of dark red, pale green, yellow and brilliant white. . . [was seen] cruising the evening skies over the region around Tacoma between the hours of 7 and 9 o'clock. . . Rumors in such towns as Kent, Grays Harbor, and Tacoma had the phenomenon explained as a Japanese airship spying out the Pacific coast. On one occasion something like a rocket was seen discharged apparently from the unknown object. (4.)

For three nights the light was seen, a fact which prompted another mention in the daily newspaper of Tacoma:

> For two nights past much curiosity has been aroused by the appearance of a large bright light apparently low in the western sky, two or three times as bright as Jupiter. It was observed both Saturday and Sunday nights between the hours of 7 and 9 o'clock, moving slowly from north to south. Suggestions were made that it might be an airship, and telephone inquiries were made covering a distance of two or three miles from this place, but no satisfactory answers were received. At times the strange light did not appear to be more than 10 to 12 miles distant. All sorts of conjectures are ventured as to the mysterious illumination. (5.)

All the elements of an airship flap seemed to be present here, an interest in airships (concern over Japanese imperialism), apparently the planet Venus as the evening star, and a local press willing to print speculation, yet why the reported "motion" from "north to south?"

Early in the evening of February 4th a whole train full of people saw the strange light:

> As the Northern Pacific train waited for the Fifteenth Street bridge to come down on the rail line that crossed the tidal flats near Tacoma, Washington, the engineer looked up and saw a strange multi-colored light in the evening sky traveling north to south. So prominent was the light, the train's conductor and some of the passengers left the coaches and ran down the track to get a better look. One person had field glasses and said he discerned a cigar-shaped mass. (6.)

During the fall and spring of 1909-10, a series of sightings of strange lights in the sky were also made in New England. According to the Hartford (Connecticut) Courant something was seen in the heavens one evening in the month of September by a Mr. E. B. Hanna, who lived in the Connecticut city of Windham. The Courant printed that Mr. Hanna's attention:

> . . .was attracted to a bright light in the east, beyond Winham. The light was high in the air and appeared to be moving rapidly, coming toward him. It swayed back and forth and had the appearance of a traveling searchlight, but it was so far away that Mr. Hanna could not get a very good idea of either the shape or size of the machine, but he had watched it until it had disappeared behind the hills between South Windham and Lebanon, being at that time moving in a southerly direction, going toward the coast. . . .(7.)

Mr. Hanna believed he might have seen a night-flying airship but showed no further interest.

The second week in December a Mr. W. E. Tillingast of Worcester, Massachusetts, let it be known he was in the process of perfecting a marvelous new type of airship and had already secretly flown his machine to New York and back two months earlier. Soon after, between December 21st and 23rd, there was a flurry of airship sightings throughout New England. Boston, Marlboro, Worcester, Webster, Fitchburg, and Lynn, recorded sightings of strange lights in the night sky. As a result Mr. Tillingast became an overnight celebrity and he obviously enjoyed the role. He gave a detailed description of his invention to a reporter of the Worcester Evening Gazette but refused to produce the craft for public inspection. Allegedly, the mystery invention was being kept in a suburban barn until all the bugs were worked out during secret night trials. Needless to say, Mr. Tillinghast never backed up his claims with actual proof. Apparently the public was being hoaxed once again as it had been many times in 1896-97. If there was any truth in the "airship" sightings, it was probably contained in the less spectacular accounts like the following. The Worcester Telegram, on December 31st, stated that a strange light had been seen in the night sky:

> "At first the light appeared to be twinkling. When seen through the telescope it appeared that the object in the air was revolving. Three colors of lights could be plainly seen with the naked eye. Mr. Stanbridge said that there appeared to be a cluster of lights." (8.)

The newspaper went on to say that the phenomenon moved out of sight to the northeast.

During the winter of 1908-09 stories of "airships" cropped up in other areas of the United States besides New England. Hunting, West Virginia; Chattanooga, Tennessee; and numerous towns in the state of Alabama reported similar aerial phenomena. (9.)

News items from Europe in 1908, meanwhile, told of balls of light exploring regions of the English countryside. Reports said some of the lights were seen hovering over farmhouses.

England received only a few months respite before sightings of strange things in the night sky began anew, swamping newspaper editors with reports. In March, 1909, at Peterborough, for example, a strange shape was seen in the evening heavens. The thing appeared to be narrow, oblong, and equipped with a glaring headlight. Fort read in the London Daily Mail an editorial comment on the continuing sighting of mysterious lights and objects in the sky. It stated that no more space in the Mail's columns would be given over to any such reports until tangible evidence was obtained. An aviation expert, a Mr. C. S. Rolls, objected. He offered his opinion that every sighting could not be written off so simply, and as the organizer of England's Aero Club, he pressed for a more tolerant view. Another gentleman, Fort noticed, debated the reality of the observations made over nearly the whole of England by expressing doubt any airport facilities for such craft would fail to come to the attention of authorities. Furthermore, if continental powers were snooping, the gentleman wanted to know, why haven't their airships been tracked crossing the waters around our island nation? Moreover, the newspaper Weekly Dispatch made some computations using the reported locations and times of the different sightings and protested the theory that the mystery object was an airship. A speed of over 200 miles per hour would have been necessary, an impossible velocity for an airship. (10.)

No mention of the English airship wave of 1909 can be complete without bringing up alleged "landing" that was supposed to have taken place on the summit of Caerphilly Mountain in Wales on May 18, 1909. Fort had taken an item from the newspaper the Daily Mail, a story told by a Mr. Lithbridge, who claimed to have seen figures dressed in thick overcoats standing near a big "tube-like" contraption parked in a field. According to Mr. Lithbridge he surprised the "airship crewmen" who became alarmed and jabbered away in some incomprehensible language with heavy accents, and then jumped into their craft and took off. Not a few of Fort's readers believe that Mr. Lithbridge may have had an encounter with some alien explorers from outer space, but such a hope is at odds with Fort's own opinion. If one reads Fort carefully, one can see that Fort discounts the possibility that any creatures from Mars were involved. It seemed to Fort that Mr. Lithbridge's tale was a fake and that the man merely had a desire for publicity. (11.)

An examination of this story as it originally appeared in the Daily Mail discloses that Mr. Lithbridge described the aerial craft's crewmen as quite normal in appearance and the airship they were flying as one of a conventional design. (12.) These details are not given in Fort's writings which explains how the case has been misinterpreted, nonetheless, since the original Daily Mail version is not readily available, misunderstandings will probably continue.

Something of an inexplicable nature happened in the Baltic region in 1909 when an "unexplained airship" circled over the city of Tallinn in Estonia on August 24th. Other reports of similar flying objects were made in southern Sweden a month later. (13.)

For the record it should be noted that an "airship" wave also swept New Zealand for a six week period beginning the last week of July, 1909, making the UFO flap of that year worldwide.*(14.)

A complete story of the 1909 "airship scare" should include a little about the political climate at the time which would help explain the Lithbridge hoax.

Most likely the airship stories were caused by the German military which was bragging about Count Zepplin's giant craft that would make it possible for Germany to attack England in spite of the English Channel. It seems that fears in England concerning the war-like intentions of Germany's Kaiser had reached such a peak by 1908, the English Parliament instructed a "Committee of Imperial Defense" to establish an invasion inquiry. Also, a novel about the German threat, The Invasion of 1910, so fascinated the English public the Daily Mail ran the book as a serial. The Mail even dressed some sandwichmen in Prussian army uniforms and had them walk about London, advertising the serialization.

It should not be considered strange then, that airship reports again gained in frequency in English newspapers in 1913, as the international situation heated up to its feared conclusion, although there was no exact reason why the second outbreak should have hit the English public in the month of January.

By 1913 even the staid London Times was receptive to airship reports, and on January 6th headlined: "Unknown Aircraft Over Dover." (15.) Cases listed by authorities during January were almost identical to those of 1909. On the 21st, for example, the Times printed:

> It is stated that on Friday evening last an airship was seen passing over Cardiff in the direction of Swansea. Captain Lionel Lindsay, Chief Constable of Glamorganshire, says: "—at a quarter to 5 I noted the object. It was dusk and foggy, so that one could not define it. It was much larger and moved faster than the Willows airship and left in its trail a dense volume of smoke. I called the attention of a bystander to the object, and he agreed that it was some large object. It disappeared quickly." (16.)

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*A privately printed work titled A Carbon Experiment?, by Orvil R. Hartle, details some UFO reports that were supposed to have taken place in the Ohio valley region in the fall of 1909. This book was a limited printing and was not available to the author.

The magazine Flight, the publication of the Aero Club of the United Kingdom, felt qualified to weigh the evidence from a standpoint of a decade of experience with powered flight. The magazine mentioned that mysterious sounds believed to have been due to an airplane had been heard in the sky at 5 a.m. in the morning of the 5th. It seemed an unlikely hour to be flying about in those days, but the magazine predicted that such annoyances to a person's sleep would eventually be a commonplace. (17.)

After a couple of weeks the editor of Flight had second thoughts about his first explanation for the mystery sounds. It had since been learned that a strange light had been seen in the sky. The editor asked:

> In that case, where did the bright rapidly moving light come from? Could it have been supplied by imagination? If it indeed were a dirigible, where did it go to, for it is hardly conceivable, since it disappeared inland, that it could have continued its cruise without being noticed by other people? (18.)

The new wave of mysterious airships over England was accompanied by another spectacular "meteor fall" that behaved in a remarkable manner.

A little after 9 o'clock in the evening of February 9, 1913, an amazing cluster of "bolides" cruised a distance of 2,500 miles through the atmosphere, from Regine, Saskatchwan, to far out in the Atlantic over Bermuda. If the "bolides" did finally fall to earth, they must have struck the ocean in the lonely expanse of the south Atlantic where the fate of the visitors from space went unobserved.

The journal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada called the passage an extraordinary display and devoted seventy pages of one issue to the case. Awed witnesses in Canada's Ontario province and Americans living in New York State cooperated with a professor C. A. Chant, who investigated the phenomenon, sending him descriptions of what they had seen.

In general people wrote of observing numerous luminous bodies moving horizontally, perfectly aligned in groups of twos, threes, and fours. So slow and regular were the objects in their passage, most people agreed with one witness who yelled, when the objects came into view: "Oh, boys, I'll tell you what it is—an aeroplane race." (19.)

Scholars accepted the meteor theory to explain the February 9th phenomenon without much reflection and in later years would consider the wealth of data, some 150 reports, in C.A. Chant's files an excellent study of how UFO sightings are transformed into conceptions. This line of thinking would be the proper scientific attitude but Charles Fort, with his usual provocative opinions, noted that during the period from February 5th to February 21st (reports of) mysterious objects in the skies over Great Britain were absent. (20.)

As unusual as the display was, the meteors did not seem to

deviate from accepted ways of falling stars. Professor Chant was, however, puzzled by one newspaper clipping sent in along with the meteor reports. According to an item from The Toronto Daily Star dated February 10th, the day after the meteor display, some Canadians living on the lakefront along the northern coast of Lake Erie had seen some strange objects flying about in the sky off shore. The objects were not believed to have been birds, therefore some thought the things might have been airplanes, though the shapes were too far away to make out details. Since there were more than one, and they moved about in clusters, there was some speculation about a possible connection with the meteors seen the previous evening. The Toronto Daily Star printed: "They passed from west to east, in three groups, and then returned west in more scattered formation, about seven or eight in all." (21.)

The editors of the English aviation magazine Flight, in March, 1913, expressed an opinion on the English airship mystery then in progress by noting that it was "grim humor" for the nation's Parliament to order the military to open fire on any more unidentified aircraft when there was no weapon in England's arsenal equal to the task.

Most reports of something unexplained in the sky around the turn of the century describe slow moving, star-like, bodies. Some slightly different cases however, were recorded in 1913. In Lansing, Michigan, a long, tube-like object sped from horizon to horizon in three minutes. The thing was seen in broad daylight. (22.) And over the city of Fort Worth, Texas, on April 8, 1913, a strange shadow was spotted on a layer of clouds. The clouds moved with the wind but the strange shadow remained motionless. (23.)

Over Hull, England, in 1913, unexplained lights in the sky hovered for thirty minutes and then were seen "shooting away." At Ipswich, England, lights were seen in the heavens making a great number of turns in the air and then they "dashed off at lightning speed." (24.) The Cardiff Evening Express reported another case which told of: ". . .a bright red light, going very fast." (25.)

By 1914 reports of airships shifted to South Africa as Europe gave its attentions to the Great War.

Charles Fort occupied himself during the years of conflict doing research and putting thoughts to paper. From sober scientific journals Fort compiled lists of strange showers from the sky. Strange because they consisted entirely of organisms. Falls of bugs, worms, fish, and bits of matter that were composed of living cells, were discovered by Fort and sorted into categories. Hitherto ignored, the data once concentrated presented weird possibilities Fort was not slow to ponder.

Fort was particularly fascinated with the organism that made up the bulk of the 294 examples he had collected. Most of the organic showers were falls of thousands of small frogs, prompting him to mused visions of odd cargos scooped up by craft from the starry regions, their nets brim full of squirming masses of slippery amphibians. The fact that a fall of tadpoles had never

been reported, and always frogs just a few months old, made his fanciful thoughts more credible. Perhaps the frogs had not been taken up in the first place? Perhaps they had been born elsewhere and the excess dumped on our heads as an example of cosmic humor?

Fort became a regular visitor to the New York Public Library where dusty tomes gave up their secrets. There, in that building, he discovered, "Monstrator" and "Neith," as his search quickly became an obsession. He attempted to make, as he termed it, an "allness" out of the strange information he was accumulating. He later described his early state of mind as an "undeveloped suspiciousness," his perceptions subject to "dogmatic pendantries," but as he pondered his weird data, laten "suspiciousness" asserted itself and he felt compelled to express strange thoughts. Fort's pen raced across dozens of pages, leaving behind inspired passages. A cerebral fever gripped him: "I think I conceive of other worlds and vast structures that pass us by, within a few miles, without the slightest desire to communicate, quite as tramp vessels pass many islands without particularizing one from another." (26.)

More and more periodicals came under Fort's scrutiny; stacks of aged books grew ever higher; scrawls filled acres of paper. Mutations, imposters, and irreconcilables were pried out of their pigeonholes and rearranged according to new tests. Bolides with brains, uncertain uranoliths, were followed with stumped selenographers and puzzled police, which then vied with astonished astronomers and excited editors. It was all there just waiting for someone.

Forgotten proceedings were rehabilitated. An Admiral Collinson had headed an investigation into a mystery of unexplained flying lights seen over a certain section of the English coast in the year 1866. The culprits responsible eluded authorities. Fort studied the records and penciled in a finish to the unsolved riddle. In memory of the Admiral perhaps, Fort postulated a simple solution in nautical terms. Fort suggested that the "navigators" of such glowing bodies might never be discovered for how often does a sea captain "descend purposely" to the ooean floor? (27.)

In 1915 Fort's buddy, Dreiser, took to inhabiting the New York Library himself to take short, self-taught, courses in the sciences seeking a simple cosmic scheme to the universe. Like more than one project Dreiser started, the try miscarried but it did give him a keener appreciation of an important manuscript Fort would ask him to read a few years hence. (28.)

Meanwhile, unable to press on any publisher Fort's "X" and "Y," Dreiser still hit it big with one novel of his own in 1916 which was the widely acclaimed work The Genius. This literary effort was attacked as immoral by the "New York Society for the Suppression of Vice," insuring the book's fast rise to the top of the best seller list. Fort sent off a waggish letter to Drieser addressing him as the "Highpriest of Evil" and bemoaning his own lack of talent of being able to convey "evil notions" when dealing with astronomic matters which apparently prevented

publishing success. (29.) As for censorship, Fort was confronted with problems peculiar to his own endeavors. He penned: "There are gulfs of the unaccountable but they are bridged by terminology." (30.) And: "Conservatism is our opposition. But I am in considerable sympathy with conservatives. I am often lazy myself." (31.)

The conflict in Europe made the difficult chore of separating the inexplicable from rumors or misinterpretations of conventional phenomenon nearly an impossible task. At one point during the Great War eleven German zepplins crowded the night sky over London on a single bombing mission. Added to such cluttering of the air was the obstacle of the blue-penciling censors of the Imperial War Office.

Likewise, little could be culled from the New York newspapers of interest to Fort, though the reason was not the war apparently, as there appeared to be a temporary lull of sightings of anything unusual in the air. Equipped with a vital doggedness, Fort spent the war years putting the finishing touches to the new manuscript he had once promised Dreiser. By the time the European conflict was over, he had almost completed his task. On Armistice Day Fort paid more attention to cascades of torn paper than to the emotional experience of the occasion, spending his time scribbling notes on the way lightweight objects fall. (32.)

Finally, in 1919, Fort submitted the result of years of hard thinking and tedious research (40,000 notes) for Drieser's inspection. It was a manuscript Fort called the Book of the Damned. As Drieser scanned the pages he became ecstatic. The book seemed to Drieser an elephantine gadfly poised to sweep down on the complacency of society, a society that had tormented Drieser ever since his poverty stricken, and generally humiliating, childhood. With haste, Drieser met with the publisher that handled his own works, to demand that Fort's book be published or else the contract covering his own writings would have to be cancelled then and there. (33.)

This aggressive rush managed to overcome any lack of enthusiasm that would have surely greeted Fort's manuscript without the sponsorship of someone of Dreiser's stature. Fort himself would have never triumphed with his modest manner and carefree philosophy, though his literary style was laced with daring, describing without embarrassment capering comets and falls of frogs carpeting the land, making the ground come alive.

The presses rolled.

One can imagine the reception Fort's work received in the year 1919. It was like flinging a dead polecat into a crowd of stuffy aristocrats. Only the boldest bunch could field that kind of football and it turned out to be those men who practiced the same art of expression as Fort. Famous author Booth Tarkington, laid up ill at the time, just happened to find a few hours to spare to read, so he ordered the newest titles from the bookstore. Thus it was by chance Tarkington learned about Fort, a daring mind that proposed some startling new views of the universe. Tarkington converted to the new improbabilities right off. (34.) As the news spread many other men of letters quickly declared their

allegiance. The Chicago Daily News assigned Ben Hecht to review the Book of the Damned and he titled the resulting article "Phantasmagoriphoia," praising Fort's work to the skies and coining the expression: "Fortean." So intrigued was the editor of the Daily News, a telegram was sent to Fort's humble Bronx apartment requesting information for a biographical sketch of Fort to be run in the Daily News along with the book review. (35.)

One author-friend of Dreiser, the famous H. L. Mencken, disputed with him about Fort's semi-cyptic answers. That, for example, perwinkles, blood, snakes, etc., can tumble out of the sky from a mysterious source high in the air Fort occasionally referred to as an "Upper Saragasso Sea," and not do violence to elementary science.

Dreiser fired a heated letter to Mencken in reply. Mencken's implication that Fort was ignorant, excited Dreiser, who strongly asserted that his Bronx friend was so advanced in his perceptions that measurements were futile. Dreiser considered Fort "stupendous" and expressed the belief that someday Fort:". . .will get full credit." (36.)

Miriam Allen De Ford, who knew Fort from personal correspondence, felt that Fort was embarrassed by extravagant praise. In one letter to her, Fort wryly remarked that his books may just be: ". . .sanitarium[s] for overworked coincidences." (37.)

The New York Times Book Review concluded its description of the Book of the Damned by calling the work: ". . .a quagmire of pseudo-science and queer speculation. . .but the very queerness of the book may be its salvation. There are persons, perhaps living in Greenwich Village, who may enjoy puzzling through it." (38.)

Fort became restless after draining what he could from the New York City Library, so setting his financial and personal business in order, he wrote Dreiser that he and his wife were going to take a trip to London.

In October, 1920, the Forts arrived in London where they found an apartment near the British Museum. Fort, the researcher, was fascinated with the Museum's vast collection and became a common sight at the place searching old journals and books. Once in a while Fort would spend an afternoon debating with strangers in Hyde Park, exchanges of which, unfortunately, we have no record. (39.)

Of their London life, Mrs. Anna Fort later told Dreiser that when she and "Charlie" took an evening walk he would often point out various stars to her and philosophize about them. At home she said her husband would spend hours gazing skyward through an open window at the twinkling points of light making up the Milky Way, lost in silent meditation. (40.)

So far, Fort had conquered only a part of the reading public, though an influential segment to be sure with the likes of Hecht and Tarkington. Fort's Book of the Damned, reluctantly printed by Boni and Liveright, numbered only about 1,000 copies in its first edition and the publishers were not sure they could unload all of that.

One day in London Fort became greatly amused and dashed off a

letter to his brother Ray back in Albany, New York, writing that word had reached him of some persons proposing some kind of Lunar expedition. With his usual jocular flair, Fort wrote that most assuredly a delegation of spacesailers would soon arrive at his door bearing a sword and an Admiral's cap on a velvet cushion (41.) The letter of Fort's was written some time in the month of January, 1921. Fort was probably referring to Professor Robert Goddard's early experiments with liquid fueled rockets which the New York Times optimistically touted with an article titled: "Moon Rocket Ready Soon." (42.)

As it was, Fort had no need to roam the solar system to deal with matters of a cosmic nature. Something equally challenging seemed to exist among the well-charted routes here on earth. After following a series of strange events in the New York Times, Fort wrote:

> It may be that if beings from somewhere else would seize inhabitants of this earth, wantonly, or out of curiosity, or as a matter of scientific research, the preference would be for an operation at sea, remote from observations by other humans of this earth. If such beings exist, they may in some respects be very wise, but supposing secrecy to be desirable—they must have neglected psychology in their studies, or unconcernedly they'd drop right into Central Park, New York, and pick up all the specimens they wanted, and leave it to the wisemen of our tribes to explain. . . .*(43.)

It seems Fort had been following a series of inexplicable vanishings at sea. On January 29, 1921, the 3,500 ton vessel Carol Deering drifted ashore at Diamond Shoals, North Carolina, inexplicably abandoned. When investigators boarded the ship, no trace of the twelve man crew was found, nor was there any clue to the cause of the mass disappearance. Dishes and eating utensils were discovered in the Carol Deering's galley laid out for a meal.

The captain of the Deering had married a very determined woman it seems, and when the usual investigation in such matters failed to locate her husband, (44.) she went to Washington D.C. accompanied by her minister to seek the help of the government. (45.)(46.) The woman and her clergyman went to the Department of Commerce to begin what they believed would be a long, tedious campaign to get a hearing. Rather surprisingly the two were promptly ushered into the presence of the Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover. Secretary Hoover told his visitors the New York Police had uncovered a scheme by a Bolshevist orientated group during a raid on the New York headquarters of a Soviet Worker's organization. Documents that were seized in the raid indicated

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*On October 11, 1973, two frightened men at Pasagoula, Mississippi, told NBC News they had been taken aboard a UFO and examined by a pair of strange, gray-colored creatures, and then released. One of the men, terrified, said: "I just kept thinking what if they'd carried us off? You'd have dragged the river and then forgot about us."

a possible plot to stir up mutinies aboard ships on the high seas. (47.) In fact, Secretary Hoover said, the vessel William O'Brien, a freighter that vanished in April, 1920, had experienced unrest among its crew just before its departure from New York harbor on its final voyage into oblivion. (48.) Mr. Hoover stated further that the Deering and the O'Brien were not the only ships to come to the attention of the government because they had met a mysterious fate. Up to ten ships had been reported missing, and like the forementioned vessel, not a single trace could be found of the ships, much less of the crews. (49.) With a promise he would do whatever was possible, Secretary Hoover dismissed the grieving woman.

True to his word to leave no stone unturned, orders went out from Hoover to every conceivable government organization that might help unravel the mystery. The State Department alerted every American embassy and consular post throughout the world, and supplied them with full particulars on every seaman that had been on the missing ships on the chance at least one sailor would turn up somewhere. The Treasury Department was instructed to have its subordinate branches, the Coast Guard and Lifesaving Service, to start a search of beaches and hidden coves along the eastern seaboard, looking for possible pirate hideouts. The Navy received orders to patrol the coastal waters, challenge suspicious vessels, and to pick up and examine any floating debris. Under Secretary Hoover's direct control, the Bureau of Navigation checked the records of the ships with the hope they might have had a bearing on the strange disappearances. Even the Justice Department got into the act and assigned Secret Service agents to coordinate the total investigation. Not to be left out, the U. S. Weather Bureau drew up a report on past storms in the North Atlantic that might have caused the high loss of tonnage (50.)

Although the full weight of the U. S. Government was employed, it was all for naught. What drives home the singularity of the rash of disappearances was the alarm of the marine underwriters in London. Pirates, storms, floating mines, and Bolshevik plots, didn't hold water with the experts on disaster at sea, Lloyd's of London. The editor of Lloyd's List was quoted in the New York Times to the effect that numerous details of the strange vanishments just didn't fit conventional explanations. Why, the editor asked, would the Deering's cargo, for example, be left intact by pirates and just the crewmen taken away, and the ship, quite valuable itself, set adrift to publicize the deed? On the other hand, the English expert went on, if the ships reported missing, by then reaching twenty in number, had been sunk by misadventure or design, why hadn't the slightest bit of wreckage turned up? (51.)

Whatever the answer, strange vanishments off the southeast coast of the U.S. would have an eerie influence on the UFO controversy.

Chapter Four

A Society of Forteans

By 1923 Boni and Liveright were again persuaded to publish a collection of weird data compiled by Charles Fort. This new accumulation was titled New Lands and was created from newspaper clippings of pink hailstones, showers of charcoal, odd will-o-wisps, and other far out items. In New Lands Fort proposed that there are "lands" in the sky, suspect regions responsible for events that have been anathemtized; the idea that someone or something, trawls the atmospheric ocean about us. He visualized explorers from the stars moving among the clouds over the countries of France, England, and America, whose navigation lights were plainly seen by: ". . .millions of inhabitants of this earth." (1.)

The Boston Transcript called Fort's New Lands "amazingly interesting," saying that some readers may regard the author as either a "marvel" or a "madman." (2.) The Book Review Digest picked out a key idea when it described New Lands as suggesting: ". . .that beings on. . .[other worlds] have made repeated attempts to communicate with us. . . ." (3.)

If the Book Review Digest was right then Fort's New Lands had made a timely appearance, for the planet Mars was due to make one of its close approaches to the earth and interest in interplanetary communication was to reach impressive proportions. Late in August, 1924, the red planet was to pass less than 35,000,000 miles away and the old controversy about the mysterious red orb was again a major newspaper story.

On August 17th the New York Times published a big article on the celestial event commenting extensively on Percival Lowell's theories about possible Martian inhabitants and using illustrations of a "canal streaked" Mars taken from Lowell's book: Mars, The Abode of Life. (4.) Little hope was put in telescopic scrutiny even though Mars would come closer to the earth than it had in two centuries, for the difficulties of peering through an unsteady atmosphere were by then well known. However, the public was still looking forward to the close approach, for a new invention, the radio, was then the rage. The possibility that mankind might achieve radio contact with an advanced Martian civilization was far more exciting than merely detecting canals by telescope, so radio silence throughout the world for short periods was arranged through an international effort so sensitive radio receivers could listen for any Martian electronic transmissions. (5.)

The day before science was to eavesdrop on the earth's planetary neighbor a New York Times editorial wondered about the possible existence of intelligent Martians, expressing the hope such beings were a reality because: ". . .such certain knowledge would do much to promote a planetary consciousness on the part of the earth-dwellers and if only there could be some threat of Martian invasion, it would not be many months before America would be an active and ardent member of the League of Nations in defense against a common earth foe." (6.)

At 10 o'clock in the morning of August 23rd British wireless experts and representatives of the Marconi Company heard strange noises on their instruments during a period of world-wide radio silence. And then, two hours later, during another prearranged radio blackout, harsh sounding signals were detected. The mysterious sounds were recorded and studied carefully but nothing could be made of them. (7.) The results of the listening project were inconclusive, but also tantalizing.

As it was his habit to follow such events, Charles Fort, in London, studied the Martian business with great interest, and taking up his pen, had written a long letter to the New York Times on August 14, 1924, nine days before the Martian radio experiment. When nothing, apparently, had come of the effort to contact Mars by radio, the Times looked with favor on Fort's letter, printing it in its entirety on August 31st. Charles Fort, for the first time reaching a mass reading audience, told the readership of the Times about the records of strange substances that had rained down out of the skies over the years. His letter to the Times was essentially a condensed version of his book New Lands, though Fort emphasized toward the missive's end that a mysterious object with hieroglyphics on it had allegedly fallen out of the sky on April 17, 1883, near Roundout Creek, New York. Fort stressed the possibility that persons knowing about the mysterious meteorite might still be living and could give clues to present whereabouts of the strange object so the message on it could be deciphered. He urged readers with any information about the case to write him in care of his Marchmont Street address on Russell Square in London. (8.)

The Times'readership was intrigued by Fort and his ideas and soon considerable mail arrived at his London residence.

An editor of a Camden, New Jersey newspaper,moved by Fort's conscriptions of eerie statistics to war against the lethargy of conventionalism in science, urged that those of a Fortean inclination should organize, a suggestion Fort discouraged on the grounds that group discipline would attract fundamentalists, occult, religious, and others of their ilk. Yet an unconnected event led to just such a step. It was the arrival at Fort's address of a letter from a Mr. Tiffany Thayer late in 1924. The letter marked the beginning of a long friendship between the two. (9.) Also a man that made his living with his pen, Thayer would become Fort's most devoted apostle. It was the efforts of Dreiser that led to Fort's discovery by the reading public, but it would be to Thayer most of the "Fortean" business would owe its perpetuation.

The temperament of Thayer differed from Fort's, in that Fort did not always take himself seriously, Fort directed some of his biggest laughs at himself. Thayer may have been little more serious in comparison, but he did have a comic streak. Remarking in his first letter to Fort that Ben Hecht had humorously predicted the Book of the Damned would drive a high percentage of its readers nuts before they reached the last page, Thayer, wisecracking, said he knew that most people are mad anyway. After Fort's death Thayer interpreted "Forteanism" as little more than witty swipes at "scientism," and, unfortunately, abandoned Fort's only really significant contribution to history, which was speculations about possible alien visitations.

Some fifteen months after his first letter to the New York Times, Fort sent a second long letter to the paper on October 2, 1925. He had been pleased with the response he had received from his first appearance on the Times' editorial page, though he apparently hadn't learned anything more about the Roundout Creek meteorite. Instead, he had gotten replies from people all the United States and England, persons who wrote about similar strange occurrences, some correspondents even asking to be kept informed of further developments in Fort's strange project. The New York Times was also pleased and printed Fort's second letter in full, under the title: "Meteors as Messengers." In his second letter Fort discussed cases of odd cast iron spheres, the size of cricket balls, that had fallen out of the sky, one of which seems to have a joint around its middle indicating that it had been manufactured. At the end of the letter Fort again invited the Times readership to drop him a line if anyone could assist him in his investigations. (10.)

Encouraged by a growing interest in space travel, Fort wrote yet a third letter to the New York Times on March 4, 1926, discussing more of the fascinating data in his files. He made a third appeal to the readership to share what knowledge they had, suggesting they could help develop: ". . .a new idea that may make some history." (11.)

While Fort snipped ship vanishment items out of the New York Times at his home in London and penned comments about beings from space fishing for earthly artifacts along lonely sealanes, his strange ideas gained support from an event at one of the most remote places on the face of the globe. Regrettably the incident never came to Fort's attention.

Nicholas Roerich, an American adventurer, was at that time engaged in his 1926 exploration of the Altai mountain region of western China. At the beginning of August the horse-mounted expedition under his command was making its way deep into the desolate heartland of central Asia, the caravan plodding slowly south from Urgo, Mongolia, with senses alert to possible attack by marauding bandits. The trek took the caravan past dry waterholes surrounded with animal cadavers, a grim reminder of the unforgiving nature of the country. Roerich kept a daily record of the expedition's progress through this inhospitable land, and on the fourth of August, spent the day assisting some Mongols in the erection of a religious shrine. The following day's entry was far from routine:

> On August fifth—something remarkable! We were in our camp in the Kukunor district not far from the Humbolt Chain. In the morning about half past nine some of our caravaneers noticed a remarkably big black eagle flying above us. Seven of us began to watch this unusual bird. At this same moment another of the caravaneers remarked, "There is something far above the bird." And he shouted in his astonishment. We all saw, in a direction from the north to south, something big and shiny reflecting the sun, like a huge oval moving

> at great speed. Crossing our camp this thing changed in its direction from south to southeast. And we saw how it disappeared in the intense blue sky. We even had time to take our field glasses and saw quite distinctly an oval form with a shiny surface, one side of which was brilliant from the sun. (12.)

After returning to the United States, Roerich published his expedition diary in 1929 under the title Altai-Himalaya. Within the book an important paragraph remained undiscovered for over twenty years. What Roerich had seen was a "flying saucer."

On August 20, 1926, Charles Fort wrote his most important letter to the New York Times. In this, the last of four letters, Fort again mentioned the planet Mars,however on this occasion he wrote that mere speculation upon communication with the Martians was not as important as the question of whether or not it was a fact that such aliens had already crossed space and were openly patrolling the atmosphere of the planet earth. If so, Fort continued, such a possibility prompted certain questions. The one question that he considered the most perplexing was why "they" had not landed and asked for a hero's welcome, a monstrous parade down Broadway? Fort suggested that such beings may be too intellectual, too "austere," for such frivolity, yet he admitted that if the Martians closely resembled earthlings their reception could turn out to be quite unpleasant, the aliens finding themselves being escorted to an insane asylum. Typically Fort could not resist a little humor.

Fort went on to ask why, if the Martians' ships have been so conspicuous in the sky, even brilliantly illuminated at times, was not the whole population of the earth fully aware of such extraterrestial visitations? Supposing such aliens did not wish to be discovered, Fort suggested that the Martians need not cloak their aerial activity from the full view of the inhabitants of the earth:

> Perhaps because one of the best ways to keep a secret is to proclaim it? Almost every great discovery has been the final perception of the obvious. If it is not the conventional or respectable thing upon this earth to believe in visitors from other worlds, most of us could watch them a week and declare that they were something else, and likely enough make things disagreeable for anybody who thought otherwise. (13.)

To help prove his point Fort then launched into a long description of the mysterious New England "airship" flap of 1909-10, well within the memory of many of the Times' readers.

Fort labored for almost a decade in England, but his health went into a decline, so he returned to New York in 1929 where he spent his last days. Back in the states, he put together what was left in his files. Most of the residue was of an occult flavor, haunted people and such, but he did find a few more strange "aircraft" reports.

Occasionally Fort emerged from his shabby apartment in New York's Hell's Kitchen to visit his friend Dreiser in the famous novelist's studio on 10th Street. Dreiser's assistant, Marguerite Tjader, noted Fort's filthy shirt cuffs and generally unimpressive appearance, but found that when Fort talked, he revealed himself to be a fascinating character. Something of a highbrow author and critic, Miss Tjader discovered that this pudgy low-set man practiced a literary form of "documentary art" that produced mystery and startling climaxes that thrilled Drieser, and to her reckoning, influenced the writings of her boss. She observed that when Drieser attended parties given by New York's leading Society Matrons he would invariably become bored, but time spent conversing with his unkempt sidekick was always a delight. (14.)

The year 1930 found Fort finishing work on a third book he named Lo! One of Fort's admirers proposed a different title, a title that would suggest that Mother Nature was irrational. Fort quickly rejected the proposal for he felt that the main message of his books was one of discovery. Lo! was the cry of discovery, so Lo! it would be. If there was anything irrational regarding his material, it was the attitude of science toward the data, said Fort. Since he dealt with many examples of an "inexplicable" event, Fort felt that perhaps natural law was in operation. Fort was emphatic about not being a marvel-monger. He did not, he insisted, collect marvels, one time miracles, but commonplace events. (15.)

Aside from writing on his manuscripts, Fort carried on numerous epistolary friendships. One regular correspondent was an author of science fiction Edmond Hamilton, who was probably the first writer to adapt Fortean material to his storytelling. The editor of Air Wonder Stories prepared the magazine's readers of Hamilton's tale: "The Space Visitors" in the March, 1930 issue, with the following in a brief introduction:

> That such beings may have actually come near the earth, is asserted forcibly by Charles Fort in his amazing book, the Book of the Damned, in which he brings forward evidence of strange extraterrestial activity, presumably from sentient beings.
>
> As Mr. Hamilton so truthfully points out, we beings of earth are not at all isolated. Any day we may have plunged upon us an enemy from space that would have no more regard for our civilization than we have for those of ants and other insects. (16.)

Hamilton wrote Fort to ask what would happen if science suddenly accepted Fortean ideas. Fort replied, with typical irrepressible rebelliousness, that he would be the first to attack the new "conventionalities" with new heresies. (17.)

In New England the old "Tillinghast Flyer" mystery was remembered on October 19, 1930, and newspapers recalled that the 1909-10 sightings were never explained in a convincing fashion: "No one ever saw the plane. No one knows where the plane took off or landed. People claimed they saw lights moving in the sky

those nights and others were convinced that they heard the sputter of the motor. . . ." It was also recalled: "Night after night in the early spring months [of 1910] people crowded the roofs of downtown buildings while the higher hills of the city were black with people—some of the lucky ones equipped with night glasses. Venus was in the ascendancy at the time and many claim that the ship had been seen on the strength of this planet's brilliance." (18.)

Meanwhile, the editor of the New York Evening Post wrote that there may be some merit in keeping scientists on their toes and that some kind of Fortean group might fill the bill. This was the second time such a proposal was made. In a way, such an organization had already achieved something of a beginning.

Fort honored Thayer by inviting him to pay a personal visit to his Bronx apartment in May, 1930, where the zany writer lived a hermit-like existence. Thayer and Fort hit it off and soon Dreiser joined the two, spending many an evening at Fort's home on Ryer Avenue (a strange place with photos of scientific freaks adorning the walls and weird specimens stored in jars) philosophizing, verbally sword fighting with their talented minds and prolific vocabularies. The trio conjured up visions of topsy-turvy universes far into the night. (19.)

Fort resisted attempts by his two friends to shift the "Fortean" outlook on things to a cynical level, knowing full well his off beat jibes could have only a mild caustic effect, if any, on scientific opinion.

Dreiser and Thayer, nevertheless, sought to enlist Fort's frolicking skies somehow into the service of social commentary, for the literary dominions were awash with contending intellectual tides in those years we remember as the Great Depression.

January, 1931, marked the publication of Fort's latest book: Lo! and to help sales Thayer rounded up some well-known literary lights for the founding of a "Fortean Society." Fort howled with laughter at the tidings of a structured organization promoting "Fortean thought," though he meekly complied to put in an appearance at the founding dinner held at the New York Savoy Plaza on the 26th. J. D. Stern, Ben Hecht, Burton Rascoe, J.D. Adams, and the publishers of Lo!, Claude Kendall and Aaron Sussman, helped Thayer and Dreiser to get the group off to a good start. Fort, all the while, tried to look inconspicuous, hating the idea of being "limelighted." (20.)

Thereafter, the Fortean group met informally and infrequently, which took the edge off Fort's dislike for the whole business, however, he continued in his refusal to be named President or even officially join. If his name was removed from the organization letterhead and they changed the group's designation to something like: "The Interplanetary Exploration Society," Fort said he would be less reticent about coming in. Thayer refused, but he assured Fort the Fortean Society would always have a fondness for rocketeers. (21.)

While this was going on the clouds over Europe began to grow dark for the second time. In Berlin the aged, bemedaled leader of Germany, Hindenburg, received Adolf Hitler to discuss the nation's

political future in view of recent gains by the Nazi party in national elections.

March 1, 1931, Maynard Shipley praised Charles Fort and his book Lo! in a New York Times review, promising potential buyers an adventure exceeding any of Verne's. Mr. Shipley titled his review "Charles Fort, Enfant Terrible of Science," and conceived one phrase that later became a special favorite of Fort's devoted friend, Tiffany Thayer. To Shipley, Fort's daring was exhilarating, so that: "Reading Fort is a ride on a comet. . . ." (22.)

Dreiser did his part in spreading the word, sending to the famous H.G. Wells Fort's Book of the Damned. Wells glanced at the volume and then denounced the work as so much rubbish, writing Dreiser that he had thrown it out with the trash (April 9, 1931). Dreiser, outraged, shot back a missive that asserted time would justify Fort's labors. As a gesture, Dreiser dropped in on Fort at the strange writer's humble abode Christmas that year and left a $100 check as a present, a small fortune in those hard times. (23)

Edmond Hamilton evangelized the readers of the pulps with another story based on Fort's works, in the magazine Weird Tales, August, 1931, which Hamilton, taking an important thought from Fort's musing, titled: "The Earth Owners." Hamilton envisioned a gaseous life form, some kind of black clouds from outer space, that attack the planet earth only to be driven off by some mysterious globes of light that "own the earth." On page 22 one finds the following dialogue:

> "Owners of the earth? What the devil do you mean, Randon?"I asked.
>
> For an answer Randon strode to a shelf and pulled down a thick red book, opened it rapidly and found a page. He looked up from it to us.
>
> "Listen to these words of Charles Fort, whose mind has explored the dark gulfs from which most minds reel back."
>
> He read in a clear voice, "I think we're property. I should say we belong to something. That once upon a time, this earth was a No-Man's-Land, that other worlds explored and colonized here, and fought among themselves for possession, but that now it's owned by something. That something owns this earth—all others warned off." (24.)

October 11,1931, the New York Times mentioned a ruckus near Point Pleasant, West Virginia. Citizens of Gallipolis Ferry had the police searching the countryside there. People claimed that a flaming, 100-foot, blimp had swooped low (300 feet) over the Ohio river apparently crashing nearby. But all the dirigible companies denied any of their craft were missing or even flying in the West Virginia area. (25.) Authorities were baffled that no trace could be found of the "crashed blimp" after an all-day ground and air search. (26.) Likewise, people living in and around Hammonton, New Jersey, December 6, 1931, had firemen, State troopers, local police, and some 200 volunteers, tramping the swamps in that area seeking a "parachute" in treacherous near jungle. Giant bonfires were lit to provide landmarks for search teams

operating in darkness. (27.) No trace of an aviator in distress was found. (28.) Perhaps only what looked like a parachute had been seen.

New Jersey must be a spooky place because the New York Times stated that an "airplane" had swooped down and disappeared behind a treeline just off a road near New Brunswick, on December 29, 1932. Police swarmed over the thick growth in the area looking for wreckage without success. The original witness declared that he didn't hear the plane engines, but the craft's blinking lights were clearly visible as the "airplane" dropped down behind the trees. (29.)

Things that appeared to have been parachutes, fiery blimps, or simply dark masses with blinking lights; things that liked to land in swamps; things that were assumed to be quite ordinary even when nothing was found to account for them; inspired Charles Fort to spell out his most important legacy in his long list of interesting predictions when he wrote that if alien explorers were to boldly visit this world, their ships or lights plainly seen, such ". . .data would soon be conventionalized." (30.)

As the first months of 1932 slipped away, Fort felt his life force ebbing. He took notes on his decline, as he seemed to do on everything, and refused a doctor. Finally on May 3, 1932, an ambulance took him to Royal Hospital, the Bronx. There Charles Fort, the court jester of literary kings, lay dying as Aaron Sussman brought him one of the first copies of Wild Talents that had just been published. Fort could only manage a faint smile. Hours later Fort died. He was 57.

The New York Times gave his passing a respectable column of type, terming Fort a "Foe of Science" (31.) which is not correct if one were to grade the man on his perceptiveness. Fort was gone but not forgotten.

The book Wild Talents was favorably reviewed by the New York Times on June 12, 1932. Tacked on the end of the review was: "Fort's death only a few weeks ago brings to an untimely end his investigations and daring hypothesis. It would have been most interesting to see what weird and startling conclusions further explorations might have led him to." (32.)

If Fort had been just a clown, instead of something of a prophet, our story would end here, but the mystery of unexplained aerial phenomenon persisted, thus so would Fort's theories.

In October, 1933, the science fiction magazine Astounding chose to serialize Fort's book Lo! to expose its contributors and readers to fresh off-beat ideas. Lo! was also the one work of Fort's with the largest printing up to that time (3,000 copies).

New Years Day, 1934, dispatches from Stockholm told of authorities there taking steps to intercept a "mystery plane" roaming the sky at will for weeks at night over the Lapland region. (33.) By January 10th the Swedish Air Force announced that at least three men of various ground search parties had thus far been lost in a determined effort to clear up the puzzle.

The phantom plane had been reported over Westerbotten in North Sweden and it was generally believed a secret base was located somewhere in the mountains. (34.) Similarly, the Finnish government,

on January 12th, notified Sweden and Norway that its territory was also being overflown illegally and that perhaps it was the Russians up to something. (35.) The Russian theory was a credible one since a gray-colored airplane was plainly seen on occasion and the Russians were very active in the region. Anyway, for two weeks the mystery plane had been active almost every night in northern Norway and northern Sweden. On January 28th, the Swedish parliament empowered the nation's Air Force to use any reasonable means necessary to stop the activities of the "ghost aviators." (36.) By February the New York Times carried the news that the Scandinavian powers were greatly alarmed by the continued reconnoitering of the unexplained "nocturnal aircraft" they had so far been unable to identify. Helsingfor and Viborg, Finland, described their night visitors as just mysterious lights which was of no help in establishing nationality, yet one wonders if the Kremlin was snooping, why do it with an aircraft adorned with lights? Aviation experts were called upon to explain the "ghost aviators" that displayed, as the newspapers termed it, "exceptional skill." The Soviets were unhappy over the uproar and steadfastly denied accusations aimed at them.

It was also stated that a mystery airplane had been recently reported over London, which seemed to prove, claimed the Times, that an "extensive scheme" of international aerial spying was going on. (37.)

Soviet military activity in the Artic during 1934 caused uneasiness in Scandinavia, and when more reports of "ghost fliers" were made toward the end of the year, alarmed Finnish radio experts began an intensive search for electronic signals, hoping to learn how the "mystery airplanes" navigated and where their base was located. (38.)

On December 3rd the Swedish High Command ordered its Air Force to begin an aerial patrol of the country's Lapland region. The Norwegian newspaper Tidens Tegn became impatient and established its own radio listening posts. The newspaper believed that the "ghost plane" phenomenon was part of Russian military maneuvers, claiming it had managed to pick up unexplained radio signals. The Norwegian military authorities then stepped in and put an end to the Tidens Tegn's private investigation. Gleefully, the Tidens Tegn's rival, the Norwegian paper Aftenposten, pointed out that the Tigen's project could not be considered conclusive. The Norwegian military continued with its investigation without private assistance. (39.) (40.)

February, 1935, Thayer notified Dreiser he now had the time to give the Fortean Society the attention it warranted and, as Secretary of the group, was planning to put out a Society magazine for the enlightenment of the masses. Dreiser learned that Thayer wanted to use his picture for the cover of the first issue. But true to his unpredictable nature, Dreiser quarreled with Thayer over some minor matter and was never featured, nor did the famous author take any further interest in the Fortean organization. (41.)

After several months of quiet the Scandinavian "ghost plane" mystery suddenly flared anew. According to the New York Times unexplained aerial activity was again being reported in the Lapland

region and November 3, 1936, the Times carried the article: "Night Air Visitors Again Arouses Finns." (42.)

While the "ghost planes" may have well been Russian aircraft, there was other phenomenon during this period that heightens suspicions something unusual was taking place in the atmosphere. Strange vertical forms, narrow, snake-like, shafts of light, were witnessed suspended in the sky. High over Cruz Alta, Brazil, this phenomenon was spotted twice in December, 1935. And a year and a half later, in July, 1937, the phenomenon was again seen over that city. Southern Norway was the scene of a similar case in March, 1935, when something was sighted in a clear, cloudless sky. Both the Tidens Tegn and the Stavanger Aftenblad printed accounts of the oddity. Moreover, just north of Palestine, Texas, during the evening hours of November 24, 1935, people were astonished to see high up in the heavens: ". . .a narrow, bright shaft of light, absolutely stationary and vertical. . . ." (43.)

On July 20, 1937, a Fortean correspondent in Europe sent Thayer in New York some information from London. It seems the British Air Ministry gave orders to investigate a strange light in the sky paying a nightly visit to the heavens over Hendon aerodome. Officials publicly aired puzzlement over this peculiar activity in the air and called the mystery the actions of an unknown "stunt pi lot." (44.)

Also, the July 22nd issue of the New York Times carried a report by the British ship Ranee which stated that its crew had spotted an "aircraft" some 500 miles off the coast of the United States apparently making a trans-Atlantic flight. This was not a minor undertaking even in 1937. Identification of the plane could not be ascertained due to darkness, but the "lights of the craft" were plainly visible. The press became interested in who the daredevil was, so American and Canadian seaboard aircraft facilities were contacted. Even wealthy individuals active in aviation were polled to obtain some clue (one was Howard Hughes). All inquiries to determine if an unannounced air feat was in progress failed to clear up the matter. (45.)

Tiffany Thayer began to fulfill his previously announced intentions by writing and publishing The Fortean Society Magazine, beginning in September, 1937. The cost came out of his own pocket, but this gave him almost complete editorial control. As a result, the vast majority of material in the first and subsequent issues did not deal with mysterious flying objects, though the Hendon, aerodome and Ranee incidents appeared in the initial publications. Thayer commented on the two aerial riddles in this way: "[these are]. . . typical of much that Fort records. Something in the air-orthodoxy explains without evidence—'a stunt flight.'" (46.)

In England a Fortean Society member noticed an item in the English press and sent it to Thayer. Thayer commented on the clipping for the readers of the Society's magazine: "The Daily Telegraph, February 8th, 1938, carried letters from four readers, two of them scientists, describing things like glowing spheres which they had seen floating in the British sky. The same issue ran another letter from a Mr. H. Bond, of Ringwood, Hampshire, describing one seen by himself and a friend: "It resembled an enormous shield of brass lighted by a searchlight." (47.)

Thayer followed his September edition of the Fortean publication with another in October, in which, for example, much ado was made of a chart showing the eccentric changes in the level of water in the New York harbor.

And then, for some reason, there was a two year gap in the publication of the Fortean Society journal. Perhaps Thayer lost interest, ran low on money, or both, however the international political situation soon galvanized Thayer into renewed activity.

There were reports in 1937 of strange things in the sky over the German-Polish border and the words used to described the UFOs were appropriate. Witnesses said the objects resembled "swords" and"coffins." (48.)

Chapter Five

"Foo Fighters"

In the year 1938 shocking news bulletins of war escalations were common as Hitler progressively took apart the treaty system that had kept European political boundaries intact since the Great War. Most observers felt there was no way of avoiding a new world conflict.

Nazi Germany eventually zeroed in on Czechoslovakia, insisting that the Czechs meet outrageous demands by October 1, 1938. There was a general fear the ultimate madness would finally commence even though the October deadline came and went without the expected outbreak of hostilities. People's nerves remained as taut as bow strings. Invasion was on everyone's mind.

In New York City at radio staton WABC, Orson Welles was making preparations for the Mercury Theatre of the Air's network program for the evening of October 30th. It was suggested that Mercury Theatre do a dramatization of H.G. Wells' classic novel "War of the Worlds," to get into the spirit of Halloween, but Orson hesitated, thinking that people would be "annoyed," or "bored," if the Mercury Theatre actors tried to put on a convincing drama about such a fantasy. However, it was hoped that if some changes were made in the storyline, like updating the event and shifting the invasion locale from London to nearby New Jersey, the show would be more creditable and entertaining.

In New Jersey, just across the Hudson river from New York City, shortly before the Mercury Theatre's Halloween show went on the air, electric lights throughout the region flickered on and off for fifteen minutes. Puzzled local technicians checked equipment without discovering anything amiss so they sought advice from their central office. It was learned that the power grid all over the state was suffering from different degrees of inexplicable energy fluctuations. Nothing appeared to be wrong, mystifying experts of the Public Service Gas and Electric Company. The cause was never discovered. On any other evening the trouble would have been just a minor nuisance.

Mercury Theatre's biggest competition was the talented ventriloquist Edgar Bergen and his wooden partner dressed in top hat and tails. Shortly after Edgar Bergen's October 30th show started, he introduced a musical number that bored some, so they gave the radio dial a twist, belatedly tuning in Welles' special Halloween program. As for many of Mercury Theatre's regular listeners, they must have been guilty of inattention, for at the outset it was made clear that the following was only a dramatization.

The radio play was introduced by the voice of Orson Welles uttering an updated version of H. G. Wells' original introduction: "We know now that in the early years of the twentieth century this world was being watched closely by intelligences greater than man's . . . ." (1.)

After the introduction the script began to deviate sharply from

H. G. Wells' original storyline, and instead relied heavily on the plot development ideas of playwright Howard Koch which led to such an astounding aftermath.

The Mercury Theatre show opened with a weather report and then played some dance music. After a minute or two the music was suddenly interrupted by an announcer who said some professor had noticed strange eruptions of gas on the surface of the planet Mars. The music resumed. After another minute or two there was another "news flash." This time an excited announcer declared that a giant meteor had fallen in New Jersey killing 1,500 people. He asked the radio audience to stand by for further news bulletins. The music had hardly resumed before there was a news flash from the site of the meteor landing area. A hysterical news announcer on the scene declared that the meteor was actually a metal cylinder, a space craft from Mars, and that the Martians were attacking the New Jersey countryside with death rays and poison gas. Top government officials were then interviewed as the nation was alerted to repel the Martian invasion.

All this was acted out much too quickly to fool people in normal times, but there was nothing normal about the year 1938. The recent Czechoslovakian war scare, with its frequent and all too real news flashes, had sensitized everyone's ears and instinctively they reacted.

A wave of mass hysteria rippled across the nation, with some of the worst panic centered in the New York city area. Telephone lines and police teletype systems became a confused mess, the switchboard room of the New York Times a madhouse. Quite a few people were just trying to check with authorities and when they realized they couldn't get through, they thought the worst. And then there was the flickering of electric lights earlier in New Jersey, which didn't help keep people calm there, in the "battle area." (2.)

In one mid-west city armed and frightened mobs roamed the streets and the mayor became so angry over the uproar he phoned New York and threatened to give a black eye to whomever was responsible for the outrage.

Orson Welles later expressed his regrets but he felt the newspapers, jealous of radio, had painted a worse picture of the panic than was warranted, after all the uproar had its humorous side, a view the public came to appreciate when the first feelings of alarm began to subside. Of the comic events that occurred, Welles likes to remember a letter he received from a friend, the famous author (and one of the founding members of the Fortean Society) Alexander Woolcott, who wrote that the big fright had confirmed his suspicions that the listeners of Charlie McCarthy had better breeding than those of Mercury Theater's. (3)

The Federal Communications Commission took a dimmer view of the panic and instituted controls on any more realistic presentations of fictional stories that might pose a threat to public order.*(4.)

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*The Men from Mars broadcast was done again a year later in 1939, in Ecuador, by a Spanish drama group. Another panic was the result and this time a mob set fire to the radio station and murdered six of the show's cast.

Hysteria of a slightly different sort was remembered in the Nebraskan magazine Prairie Schooner in its winter, 1938, issue. Writer Rudolph Umland, in his article "Phantom Airships of the Nineties," reported in detail about the panic that caused such a stir in the American mid-west in 1897. While he apparently was not aware of a few Martian invasion rumors that were printed in some newspapers in Kansas and Missouri, Mr. Umland did note that the aerial mystery had spread astonishment and wonder. In Lincoln, Nebraska, the end of the world was predicted, while in Topeka, Kansas, people took to their cellars expecting an imminent catastrophe as the mystery light sailed overhead. A man in Kearney, Nebraska, declared himself a prophet and startled the citizens of the town by proclaiming an impending attack from the sky and even naming the exact street that would be the first to be exterminated.

Umland, something of a pioneer UFO researcher, after recounting a lot of the nonsense that appeared in the newspapers of the time, concluded: "Just what the strange lights were that moved across the sky in 1897 is a matter of conjecture." (5.)

In March, 1939, the chief Fortean Society correspondent overseas, Eric Frank Russell, who resided in England, gained fame in science fiction circles with a highly successful story he wrote for the magazine Unknown. In this tale, titled "Sinister Barrier," Russell proposed that globes of light secretly exist in the atmosphere as a weird type of life form, feeding on the emotional energy of humans and only becoming visible under special conditions. (6.) Aware his "Sinister Barrier" story would be well received, Russell prefaced his work with tributes to the Fortean organization and its Buddha, Charles Fort, for inspirational assistance. Grateful, the English author set about combing the European press for Fortean-type information with renewed energy.

On July 27, 1939, the planet Mars came closer to the earth than it had since 1924, and another attempt was made to contact the red planet by radio. A forty-man team listened carefully to different radio frequencies using the facilities of a powerful shortwave station on Long Island, New York. Strange sounds were heard but experts attributed them to cosmic static. One technician joked that if Mars was inhabited it must be populated by howling felines. The Nazis took notice and ridiculed the American stunt. The German Press: ". . .reminded its readers of the 'Martian invaders' scare of the previous October and depicted Americans as having since then been 'brooding anxiously on the thought that perhaps someday disaster might after all befall the world from this nearby planet.'" (7.) Any worry about Mars couldn't have lasted long, the Nazis saw to that.

Hitler learned that England and France had firmly guaranteed the security of Poland, his next victim. Enraged, the Fuehrer screamed to gathering of his top people that those countries that dared to resist his will would "soon choke on a stew he was cooking up." General European warfare erupted on September 1, 1939.

The resulting insanity infuriated Thayer. He began anew to write and publish the Fortean Society magazine which now took on some political overtones (January, 1940). Thayer, like many others,

hoped the United States could somehow stay out of the widening conflict. He had an unusually strong fear that the press or a popular public figure would lead the Americans sheep-like into the war.

While the world conflict spread death and destruction, the Forteans diverted themselves by studying various bizarre information, blissfully unaware that some of the data they so lightly entertained and considered their own had an important appointment to keep at General Eisenhower's headquarters in Paris in the fall of 1944.

After some effort, Thayer and the Society managed the reprinting of all four of Fort's books, which had originally been limited editions, in a single 1,200 page tome. The publishing date was May, 1941. The collected works, bound in a light blue cover and titled The Books of Charles Fort, was only a minor success at first but the fame of the volume slowly gained in momentum. The reprinting must be considered the biggest achievement of both Thayer and the Fortean Society. Thayer was especially pleased because the opportunity enabled him to pen a long introduction to the work of his favorite author. Enhancing the volume was the addition of a massive index. Book reviewers coined new labels to describe Fort: "clapperclawer of science," the "Mad Genius," and the "author of the eerie."

The war at this time found German armies deep in Russia (September, 1941) as the fortunes of the Axis approached the high water mark. In the Indian Ocean the British troopship S.S. Pulaski sailed along the African coast on its journey to Suez. One evening crewmen aboard the Pulaski noticed a "strange greenish globe" following the ship. For an hour the object, about 4,500 feet in the air, stayed with the Pulaski and then it vanished. (8.)

During the last months of 1941, Mr. Norman Markham, a Fortean Society member, submitted a two-page article to Thayer, who accepted it for publication in the Society's journal. Markham had strong feelings about what the Society should be concentrating on and he tried unsuccessfully to make Thayer and the rest of the group come around to his point of view. Sometimes capitalizing whole sentences, Markham listed the sightings of mystery planes reported over Europe, the phantom parachutes in New Jersey, and other unusual reports of a similar nature. Markham hinted at a secret conclusion he had arrived at and had cautioned Thayer not to mention it to the Society's readership. Thayer refused to take the whole business seriously, but since the outrageous was the lifeblood of the Society, he let it slip out that Markham was studying strange maritime vanishments and their relationships to the orbital position of the planet Venus. (9.)

It would seem Markham fantasized a threat from the planet Venus, being influenced perhaps by the 1938 Martian invasion scare. Probably nobody cared, for the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor the same time as the Markham article appeared on the newsstand in the December, 1941 issue of the Fortean Society magazine.

For a while not much happened Fortean-wise until April, 1942, when a round object with a metallic glint hung in the air over

Fort Aoulef in the middle of the Sahara desert for three days. The thing was observed by a party of French military meteorologists who had not the slightest idea of the object's identity. (10.)

Five months later there was a report of more unexplained objects hovering in the sky. This time two were seen in the air over an Army Air Base at Columbus, Mississippi, and though the case is not an outstanding one, the general description of the mysterious objects compares well with other such reports made during the war years. The things looked "round and reddish." (11.)

One night a small allied convoy of four transports and three escorts plowed through the Norwegian Sea off Iceland. Overhead a high overcast blocked out most of the light from the moon and the stars. It was almost perfect sailing conditions for the convoy since it was very unlikely the ships would be detected by the enemy, nevertheless about midnight a lookout sounded the alarm. There was a call to action stations and everyone became very brisk and eager-eyed. High in the dark sky was the cause of the alert. Floating high over each transport was a mysterious pale white globe. Gun crews of the convoy tensed, waiting for orders. U.S. Naval officer William G. Schofield, a newspaperman in civilian life, was on the bridge of the Commodore ship following the progress of the alert which he later remembered as vivid yet seemingly unreal.

Aldis lamps blinked across the water between ships spelling out: "What are they?"

An order was given to maintain formation and not to fire. After some hesitation the convoy was commanded to make a series of course changes. The objects, which Schofield described as looking like "balls of cold light," stayed with the ships, shadowing them without difficulty. For an hour the convoy steamed on a zigzag course, the mysterious globules matching every move in the sky overhead, and then the objects rose at tremendous speed to a much higher altitude. At this higher elevation the globules lined up in a formation, and then sped off at great velocity in the direction of the Artic Circle. (12.)

Meanwhile, a writer that wrote for popular periodicals became interested in Charles Fort in the early 1940's and began doing a regular feature for Coronet magazine based on the information found in Fort's books. The writer, R. DeWitt Miller, titled his feature "Forgotten Mysteries," and to his credit he wrote in plain language which avoided the confusion Thayer's unusual writing style was creating in the Fortean journal.

Around the latter part of 1943 a gentleman by the name of Arthur Louis Joquel II established "The Society for the Investigation of Unusual Phenomena," a short-lived organization about which little is known. An index to R. DeWitt Miller's Coronet features was included in the group's initial newsletter, an eleven-page multigraph publication that also carried a tribute to Charles Fort and the Fortean Society. (13.)

Neither the Coronet series or the "investigators of unusual phenomena" offered anything like a strong challenge to Tiffany Thayer's dominance of Fortean-type material, though the days of such a situation were numbered. While Thayer still continued to print a few items about things seen in the sky, like the strange

moving light seen in the heavens over a town in Missouri on May 23, 1944, (14.) the vast bulk of the Fortean magazine was still given over to such confusing non-aerial oddments as "Anti-Einstein Theories," "Atom-anatomies," and "Butterfly Map Projections."

The Society, nevertheless, had at least one member still staunchly devoted entirely to the theory of visitors from space and mysterious vanishments, but he was rarely referred to in the Fortean publication's columns. One rare occasion was soon after a strange fireball flashed low over the midwestern United States on August 8, 1944. In The Fortean Society Magazine, renamed Doubt in the mid-1940s, Tiffany Thayer light-heartedly coupled the bolide story with a newsclipping from Mattoon, Illinois. Thayer noticed that some 40 people in the town of Mattoon became infected with mass hysteria when a rumor started that they were breathing a deadly invisible gas being spread by an unidentified man wearing a skull cap. Referring to what he called the "fiery chariot" seen on the eighth of August, Thayer suggested that the villan of Mattoon might be somebody from one of Fort's "New Lands," jesting that any such visitor would be confronted with difficulties if spare parts were needed. And Thayer expressed wonderment why the Society's "expert on celestial visitors," evidently meaning Norman Markham, so far had not let out a peep. (15.)

Civilians were generally unaware of anything that could not be shrugged off as just a wartime phenomenon. Fortean Eric Frank Russell, on watch in war-ravaged Europe, summed up the problem thusly: "The skies became so full of exploding, colliding or collapsing fruits of world technology that many a valuable item was overlooked or discarded because it bore too close a resemblance to common events." (16.)

In spite of such difficulties UFO phenomena suddenly increased in frequency to such an extent military intelligence became alarmed.

Over Palembang, Sumatra, on August 10, 1944, a red, fiery ball six feet in diameter chased an American war plane while it was on a bombing mission. One of the first of many other similar cases that were baffling Allied Intelligence. (17.)

September, 1944, brought with it a number of strange occurrences. In Europe an enlisted man with the Canadian army fighting near Antwerp, sighted something extraordinary slowly moving through the air, coming from the direction of German-occupied Holland. Immediately he assumed the thing had something to do with the Nazi V-weapon barrage, at that time being directed against the vital Belgium port. The soldier yelled a warning to the other men in the area. The Canadian troops in the vicinity cautiously watched a three foot sphere pass by. The thing seemed to be made: ". . . of cloudy glass with a light inside." After a minute or two several other strange spheres appeared following the first one. (18)

The Allies were not the only ones puzzled. The Axis Forces were encountering similar phenomena. A former German soldier was interviewed by an American newspaper many years after the war because it was learned he had had an unusual wartime experience that bore a close resemblance to modern UFO sightings. According to the German soldier, a certain Private Immel, his unit was in the front

lines in France, in September, 1944, when a strange object was suddenly noticed in the sky. Although it was night time, Private Immel could make out the object's general appearance as the thing glided through the air to a point low in the sky nearby where it became stationary. The object seemed to be made of some shiny metal because of its "silver-white" color. Private Immel said the object was fired upon by his company, the thing emitting an intense light in response to the attack, and although the area was given a good going over when the sun came up, no trace of the object was found. (19.)

Back on the American homefront, on the banks of the Clinck River at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, a huge, black, windowless building was being constructed. In the middle of September, 1944 this structure, a gaseous diffusion plant, began operation. This unusual factory was designed to prepare quantities of fissionable material for the United States' most important secret weapon, the atomic bomb.

Shortly after the plant began operations the area had a very odd visitor. A strange metallic-looking, tube-like, object was spotted hovering over a road near the Oak Ridge plant. The object moved away as a crowd started to gather. The sighting was reported to the FBI. (20.)

Mysterious vanishments were also being reported during the war. On November 23, 1944, an American B-17 swooped down to make a sloppy emergency landing close to a British anti-aircraft battery in a Belgium field. The British gunners rushed up to the downed bomber to rescue the crew, but were greatly puzzled to find no one aboard. The bomber had apparently landed itself, something that was known to happen once in a while after the crew had abandoned a plane in the air. After turning off the engines by experimenting with the controls, the British soldiers examined the plane's interior to learn why the bomber's crew had bailed out of a seemingly undamaged plane. The Tommies were astounded to discover all ten of the crew's parachutes in the aircraft! (21.)

That very evening, November 23rd, an American night fighter rolled down the runway with ever increasing speed, and with a swelling roar climbed into the night sky over Dijon, France. Lt. E. Schueter, the plane's pilot, set a northern course to begin a search and destroy mission over the Nazi held Rhineland region down river from Strasbourg. Manning the "electronic eye" of the big night fighter was a Lt. D. Meier, an experienced combat radar operator. A third officer, intelligence expert Lt. F. Ringwald, rode along to keep tabs on any final hour secret weapons of the Germans.

Widely spaced clouds a ghostly gray against the black heavens formed a backdrop as the deadly flying machine skipped over treetops and smokestacks. Lethal fireflies arched through the darkness in a vain effort to seek out the speeding plane as the pilot dodged machine guns hidden in shadows of the landscape. The three Americans also kept their heads on swivels to prevent being pounced on by the Luftwaffe.

Suddenly they spotted nine orange lights moving fast, one behind the other, off to their left. A quick check for possible ground lights and reflections failed to account for the glowing points,

so Lt. Schueter jerked the controls and stood his plane on a wingtip in order to turn into a possible attack by an enemy night fighter. The strange lights winked out only to reappear far out of range of Lt. Schueter's guns.

Seventy-two hours later a Lt. H. Giblin and a Lt. W. Cleary were on another night fighter sweep when a red globe of light was seen by them sailing through the air at better than 200 miles per hour.

More and more reports of the mysterious spheres were compiled by military debriefing officers and they were all vouched for by men the caliber of officer Ringwald. (22.)

It wasn't long before Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force based at Paris issued a statement which officially recognized the existence of the strange flying globes. Allied experts at headquarters expressed a belief to the press that the fiery-looking objects were some sort of new and novel German secret weapon. The official communique described the "Nazi device" as resembling a large glass ball which apparently had some, as yet unknown, air defense function. The structure, purpose, and mode of propulsion had eluded Allied Intelligence, for oddly enough it seems none of the spheres had been captured. (23)

By late December, 1944, the whole 415th squadron at the Dijon nightfighter base in France buzzed with shop talk and wisecracks about the strange, but as yet harmless, flying globes. The pilots that had yet to see the mysterious objects were inclined to jest their buddies "that saw things."

Lt. Donald Meiers of Chicago told the Associated Press that not only had he seen the eerie balls of fire flying off his wing tips, but that he had seen the mystery objects assume a vertical row of three and take up a position directly in front of American night fighters. On other occasions, he said, clusters of as many as 15 balls of light would appear in the night sky during missions, flying some distance away, flickering on and off.

Another pilot, Lt. Wallace Gould, said similar strange lights had followed his plane during an intruder mission, and after tagging along for a while, the glowing objects zoomed upward, taking only a few seconds to vanish from sight.

Lt. Edward Schluter told the press he had seen the unexplained objects or lights more than once. He said the fire balls looked like "shooting stars" when they moved fast, streaking through the night sky.

The Associated Press listed the names of twenty other American pilots who had seen the strange glowing balls, and all the pilots expressed a consensus that the mysterious objects appeared in the greatest numbers over large German cities, especially Vienna and Munich. But if the objects were some type of Nazi device, how the things flew puzzled the American pilots because none of them had detected any structure on the weird spheres. The objects appeared to be smooth surfaced, like Christmas tree ornaments. (24.)

At Air Group level a more somber view set in as pilots flying the P-47 Thunderbolts began to report objects in the air they described as "silver balls." Since the P-47s flew only daytime missions, the phenomenon being reported could not be tricks of light in the darkness.

The mystery got even bigger when American B-29s reported similar strange spheres stalking the bombers on missions over Japan. In appearance the phenomenon was the same as that reported over Europe. In the daytime the mysterious phenomena looked like solid, white-colored spheres that reminded a person of Christmas tree ornaments, and at night the balls would glow with a bright light changing color occasionally from white, to orange, to red, and then back to white again.

The B-29 pilots had no better luck than those flyers in the European theater in shaking off their unwelcome companions. For example, near Turk lagoon in the Pacific, early in 1945, a pair of red-colored globes gave chase to a B-24 Liberator, keeping pace with the plane for a full hour. What made the case particularly interesting was that the two globes never got nearer than a 1,000 yards to the B-29, which made it impossible for the phenomenon to be caused by eddy currents or static electricity in any way connected with the bomber. (25.)

Stockholm notified the New York Times on January 19, 1945, that it was preparing a special protest to the German government. The Nazis had long been testing the V-1 flying bomb and V-2 rocket at its Baltic test base, Peenemunde, but the German scientists had switched their missile tests to Heidelager, in Poland, after the big Allied air raid of August 17, 1943. Yet the Swedes claimed that late in 1944 strange objects had been reported flying over central and southern Sweden. The Swedes nicknamed the objects V-3s, saying that the new devices seemed to be low flying, long range weapons, probably some kind of giant rocket plane. There was uncertainty about the strange device because none had crashed. Evidently using the data collected from Swedish witnesses, Stockholm expressed the opinion that the mystery missiles were being launched from the Danish island of Borholm to a target area in southern Norway. (Records examined after the war show no such test range or testing activity.) (26.)

When the foo fighters appeared in large numbers in the skies of Europe in 1944, the British intelligence expert Dr. R. V. Jones entered the picture. Dr. Jones had previously assisted in the unraveling of the mystery of Germany's V-1 flying bomb and V-2 high trajectory rocket. This time Dr. Jones proposed that the strange lights seen in the sky by Allied pilots might be single engine German night fighters with lights in their propellor hubs.

Years later Dr. Jones admitted that the German fighter theory was unsatisfactory and even offered evidence against it, yet he still insisted in substituting another theory which many find equally unacceptable. Dr. Jones now asserts that the foo fighters were no more than light reflections from wingtip eddies. (27.)

An official foo fighter investigation was conducted with one of the investigators being the American scientist Dr. H. P. Robertson. The mystery is still officially unexplained, (28.) and although the Pentagon file on the riddle remains classified, (29.) the official opinion is that the foo fighter phenomenon never constituted a danger. (30.)

Over Tierquin, Ireland, in January, 1945, a huge fiery ball coasted slowly through the sky in the western direction, making

such an impression on witnesses on the ground that they compared the size of the thing to that of the moon. The thing hardly had the appearance of a reflection, or the motion of a meteor, which would have been a better guess. (31.)

To complicate matters even more, mysterious glowing balls of light were reported in the U.S. Strange round objects were seen in the air over Fisherville, Kentucky, on April 17, 1945. A Mr. and Mrs. James Hendry complained to the Louisville Courier-Journal that one of the objects descended from the clouds down to a point just above his home, where it hovered and lit up both his house and yard with a brilliant, pulsating light. (32.)

In April, 1945, the foo fighters were still being reported in Europe. A "crystal ball-like" object paced a B-24 bomber near Linz, Austria, and the American pilot insists to this day the sighting was: ". . .definitely no hallucination." (33.)

Elsewhere, more mysterious events were taking place which at first glance seem to have no connection with the foo fighter riddle. What has been called a "small dress rehearsal" took place in July. A news story on the matter read:

> Every air-sea rescue unit in South Florida and the Royal Air Force from the Bahamas had been mobilized to hunt for a missing PB-4YW, 4 engine, Privateer with 4 officers and 11 enlisted men on board.
>
> Lieutenant William C. Bailey of New York piloted the big plane off the runway of Miami Naval Air Station on a routine training mission. The single-tailed version of the Army's B-24 headed out to sea at 12:26, Wednesday morning, July 18, 1945, and never returned.
>
> A gigantic but futile air-sea search was conducted without turning up anything, either in the sea or on the beaches. (34.)

Tiffany Thayer's resistance to giving the "visitors from space" idea much attention in Doubt possibly prompted the creation of a couple attempts to play up the theme.

A group in southern California, with chapters in San Diego and Los Angeles, set up shop in 1945 and called itself the "Borderland Sciences Research Associates." The organization said it was dedicated to the study of strange occurrences ignored by science which resembled the unexplained data collected by Charles Fort. Two theories interested the borderlanders the most. One was the proposal that an undiscovered civilization existed somewhere in caves deep in the interior of the earth, and the other was the mystery of "ether ships" which visit the earth periodically, coming from some place in outer space.

Similarly, the science fiction pulp Amazing Stories began publishing elaborate "true" stories of a secret subterranean race of beings that was allegedly responsible for a lot of unexplained mischief on the surface of our world, and stories of another ethnic stock that lived among the stars, occasionally spending their time tormenting mankind by carrying off ship crews in their spacecraft and causing unexplained airplane crashes. Both concepts had a

close likeness to the ideas Charles Fort amused himself with back in the early 1900s, just before the final arrangement of his collection of esoteric information. Fort had disowned any purely fictional treatment of the two ideas, which were the themes of his manuscrips X and Y.

Though it's uncertain whether or not the editors of Amazing Stories, the Borderlanders, or the Forteans, knew much of anything about the foo fighters mystery, one must admit their thinking was ripe for such an intriguing riddle.

One might say the same for persons not usually associated with Fortean ideas, and as an example, we could refer to something that happened in New Mexico in the middle 1940s. Los Alamos, in the forementioned state, was the headquarters of super-secret government nuclear research, and due to the caliber of experts employed at the research center, luncheon conversations tended to be far from ordinary. One afternoon a few scientists got into a discussion about the stars and the mathematical probability of the existence of other earth-like planets. The realization that the universe must be teeming with intelligent life, even space-faring civilizations busy exploring their stellar neighborhoods, was readily accepted by the group. World famous physicist Enrico Fermi, one of the group, spent a few moments in deep thought mentally digesting the vast statistical possibilities. Suddenly Fermi was struck by a thought like a bolt from the blue. He blurted out: "Where are they?" (35.)

With the war over and security relaxed, it wouldn't be long before mysterious lights and objects in the sky would become conspicuous in the newspapers. As it happened, strange things kept occurring right up to the last days of the war and beyond.

On May 7, 1945, Nazi Germany capitulated, but in the Far East Japan still resisted Allied forces. On the 23rd and 25th of May American B-29 Superfortresses made heavy incendiary bomb raids on Tokyo. After the B-29s passed over, Mr. Tomoyo Okado, a Tokyo businessman, emerged from his bomb shelter to observe some strange saucer-like, blue-gray, objects in the air following the U.S. warplanes. He later said the objects were: ". . .like hotcakes—about 20 square yards. . .[in size and] were followed several times by six feet wide and 30 feet long colored air waves." Also he noticed that: "The objects flew noiselessly and did not crash." As for the object's speed, he said they zipped through the air "like a taxi," which is, to anyone who has ridden in a Tokyo taxi, really moving. (36.) (37.)

An American bombardier of one of the B-29s of the 52nd Squadron, 29th Bombing Group, also saw some strange objects during the July 23rd and 25th raids. U. S. airman Gerry Dumphy said he sighted some:". . .round, speedy balls of fire." He further stated that the things paced the B-29s on their way back to their base on Guam. Machine gunners fired on the fireballs without any apparent effect. Throughout the Marianas Islands chain, where there were many bomber bases, every B-29 outfit eventually claimed its share of fireball sightings. As time wore on, the fireballs paced the bombers farther and farther out to sea after raids on Japan and became more active in their maneuvering. (38.)

And then on August 6, 1945, President Truman announced to the world that the United States had dropped something called an "atomic bomb" on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Three days later a second atomic bomb leveled the naval and industrial city of Nagasaki.

Emperor Hirohito announced Japan's surrender in a personal radio address on August 8, 1945, ordering the termination of Japanese resistance on all fronts.

Twenty days after the Japanese capitulation, on August 28th, U. S. occupation forces were scheduled to land on Japanese soil, but a typhoon delayed troop movements. Out over the ocean that day on a flight between Okinawa and Iwo Jima, was an American C-46 carrying some of the occupation personnel. As the plane fought its way through stormy weather, one passenger, an Army Air Force officer named Leonard Stringfield, happened to glance out the window. To Stringfield's great surprise he saw three brilliant, white-colored balls of light pacing the C-46. (39.)

A similar case was reported the same month by the Officer of the Deck of the U. S. S. Bradford at sea several hundred miles southeast of Okinawa. A "glowing reddish-white" object was spotted racing through the air at a speed far exceeding that of any aircraft, making a turn, and then zooming vertically until it was out of sight. The witness remembers not logging the incident since he: ". . .was convinced it had nothing to do with the war." (40.)

The war was over, but the foo fighter mystery remained. This fact gained some widespread attention toward the of the year.

The December, 1945, issue of the American Legion Magazine called attention to the World War II sky riddle with an article titled: "The Foo Fighter Mystery," reminding the nation's veterans the military still had an enigma on its hands left over from the war.

The nation's top brass,however, had quickly shifted its attention from Germany to Russia and wasn't worried about the foo fighters. Already there existed a conviction among a lot of military experts that the United States was now confronted by an enemy more dangerous than Hitler's Germany. The Pentagon worried that rapid demobilization and the attitude of a war-weary public would result in an America with an insufficient defense force, especially since technology had shrunk the world like a prune.

On December 5, 1945, Army Air Force Lieut. General James H. Doolittle, a Presidential advisor on foreign intelligence activities, addressed a luncheon at the New York Waldorf Astoria. Present at the luncheon was a distinguished array of influential gentlemen that had banded together to form an "Air Power League" dedicated to the establishment of the Air Force as a separate service branch and the general promotion of more aircraft for America's defense.

After the dishes had been cleared away, General Doolittle rose to outline the needs of the country's military forces. The new American Air Force, he said, must have at least 400,000 men and 5,000 first line aircraft as a permanent peacetime strength. The next war, he went on to say, would take place over the artic regions, be extremely brief and see the employment of jet planes and rockets tipped with atomic warheads. (41)

At almost that very instant five Navy torpedo bombers were roaring down the runway at Fort Lauderdale Naval Air Station, Florida. The planes gained altitude and then set out on an eastern heading over the ocean for a brief training flight. The aircraft were large, three-man planes, particularly buoyant by design and the crews trained for operations over water.

The sun shone in a sky strewn with scattered clouds as the five aircraft sped out to sea on what promised to be a short routine flight, however, somewhere out in the blue-green expanse off the southeastern United States, a region where Herbert Hoover had difficulties back in the twenties, the military now had its own rendezvous with limbo.

Just prior to 5 o'clock in the afternoon strange radio traffic between the five planes was monitored back at Fort Lauderdale. The dialogue heard was alarming. The five planes seemed to be lost. Panic gripped the pilots as command of the flight was relinquished from pilot to another. The Avenger torpedo bombers radioed Fort Lauderdale around 5:25 that they believed they were about 75 miles northwest of the Banana River. That would put the lost flight about 50 miles west of Daytona, Florida.

The Weather Bureau reported winds gusting up to 40 miles an hour and scattered thunderheads in the general area of the last reported position, so the Naval Base Commander, Comdr. H. S. Roberts, who was summoned to deal with the emergency, surmised that freak winds had blown the five torpedo bombers off course. Still it seemed odd that five planes couldn't even find Florida.

When time came for the fuel of the aircraft to run out, nervous personnel at Fort Lauderdale waited for radio fixes of the location of the ditching of each plane. No radio messages were received.

A big Martin Mariner flying boat, with 13 air rescue men aboard, set off for the last estimated position of the missing torpedo planes. Shortly afterward Fort Lauderdale radioed the flying boat for a progress report. The big Martin Mariner did not answer.

Now frantic appeals were sent via radio to a ship in the area, the U.S.S. Gaines Mills, requesting that its crew make a visual check of the sky. The Mills sent back a reply that an explosion had been seen high in the air a short time before and what looked like burning resinue had spiraled seaward from the aerial blast. (42.) (43.) (44.)

All six planes, the five torpedo bombers and the big Martin Mariner, had vanished into thin air. No wreckage or survivors were ever found, even after a massive search making the case one of the most mysterious in the Pentagon's files.

It could be that a rational answer will someday be found though a Navy officer offered what is the most "Fortean" idea regarding the riddle after an inconclusive official inquiry. Where are the pilots and planes? "Mars perhaps," suggested the officer with a shrug. (45.) (46.)

Chapter Six

"Are Men From Mars Knocking?"

In January, 1946, a British scientist spread rumors that Russia had developed a very compact atomic bomb, one small enough to fit in the nose cone of a long range rocket. President Truman was quickly advised that the rumors were completely unfounded so he called a news conference to discredit the claims, evidently concerned about such talk. (1.) Concern about the threat of intercontinental atomic warfare could be traced back to July, 1945, when Brig. General David Sarnoff, President of the Radio Corporation of America and an expert on advanced weaponry, wrote a long essay for the public's edification which was later published in the New York Times. While no intercontinental ballistic missile had yet been developed, Sarnoff warned the American public to be realistic. He wrote: "If some aggressively minded nation was the first to develop them, it might be tempted to use them immediately; to wait might mean its own eventual destruction. There may be no second chance . . .[also] we must have the means of detecting enemy-guided projectiles hundreds of miles from our coasts. " (2.)

Meanwhile, the U.S. War Department authorized research to make sure that America would stay ahead of any other nation in military technology. For example, the U. S. Army Signal Corps began sending radar signals to the Moon in February, 1946, with the hope such tests would lead to the development of the detection of long-range rockets operating above the stratosphere. (3.)

During the tests Major General Harold McClelland happened to indulge in some fanciful speculations, telling the Associated Press that radar signals might be used to establish contact with intelligent life on other planets in space. The General said: ". . .if intelligent human life exists beyond earth such signals could be answered. We might even find that other planets had developed techniques superior to our own. . . ." (4.)

Radar contact with the Moon captured the imagination of a British playwright who quickly wrote and produced the drama "The Red Planet," which was based on General McClelland's suggestion. The difficulty of exchanging ideas with the Martians was surmounted with a mathematical code.

The public's imagination,however, remained earthbound. On March 4th, in France, a radio show reminiscent of the 1938 Orson Welles broadcast caused the city of Paris and large areas of France to be thrown into panic, but the hysteria was not over invaders from space. The radio show was a dramatization of a full scale atomic war that threatened to end the world. (5.) Two days later Winston Churchill gave his famous "Iron Curtain" speech at Fulton, Missouri, affirming that the future international situation boded ill.

Public concern was also heightened by the Congressional Pearl Harbor Investigation Committee chaired by Alben Barkley, which held hearings on the 1941 surprise attack during the spring, publishing disturbing findings about the past failure of military intelligence.

During the summer of 1946 some very mysterious news came out of Europe. Strange "missiles" and unexplained lights were reported flying about in the skies over Scandinavia. Even the conservative New York Times (6.) and Christian Science Monitor (7.) gave space to the mystery on their front pages. The origin and nature of the strange objects, or "ghost rockets" as they were dubbed by the press, eluded the best efforts of military experts.

The Christian Science Monitor reported: "Some days strange pilotless flying machines have been seen flying slowly. Other descriptions approximate more nearly to the 3,000 m.p.h. rockets familiar to the British." (8.)

Rumors began to build rapidly that the Russians might be manufacturing weapons in Germany which was a clear violation of the Potsdam Conference. If the Russians were testing missiles over the Baltic, it was a blunder of major proportions, for it forced the Western Powers to insist on an inspection of the Soviet zone of occupied Germany.

Tiffany Thayer gave the choicest space in Doubt to correspondents sending in clippings on the ghost rocket business, and when some witnesses, according to some accounts, claimed that the"rockets" had a dazzling light on the nose of the missile and not the end. Thayer, greatly mystified, wondered if people could make up their minds on how the "rockets" were being propelled. Thayer was also puzzled by the "radio bomb's" habit of blowing up and their uncanny marksmanship for bodies of water. Even though he couldn't tie up such loose ends, Thayer was certain who was behind the excitement and why. He blamed the whole mess on the U. S. Office of Strategic Services, thinking that the organization was concocting scientific trash to scare the public into believing those "Damned Reds" could send Atomic Bombs raining down on America from half a world away. "Malarky," he snorted. Referring to rockets in general he wrote: ". . .before you know it the Pentagon will be burning up billions." (9.) Financially speaking, Thayer's aim was dead center.

Indications were, however, that no Western Intelligence agency knew the true nature of the ghost rocket phenomena. (10.) Furthermore, while the Pentagon did favor public awareness of a Russian threat, the ghost rocket mystery seemed to present a terrifying danger too imminent and overwhelming to be a scheme dreamed up by rational men in a government agency. Furthermore, Thayer seems to have ignored attempts by authorities to play down the mystery. For example, on June 3, 1946, the following story was carried by the Associated Press, datelined London, just as the ghost rocket mystery erupted:

> The London Daily Express said today that the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima "weighed four tons and was so long that only a superfortress could carry it." The article, naming its source as Washington, D.C., said all attempts to reduce the bomb's weight below four tons have failed.
>
> This means, say the Washington reports, that long-range rockets carrying atomic bombs will not be possible for at least 10 years. (11.)

ROCKETS SAIL OVER SWEDEN

Terrorized People Demand Action.

SWEDEN UNDER ROCKET SHOWER

Hint Experiments by Russians.

SWEDES STUDY MYSTERIOUS AIR MISSILES

Swedes Annoyed By Bursting of "Ghost Bombs"

SWEDEN TARGET FOR MYSTERIOUS 'GHOST ROCKETS'

Sights Hundreds Missiles In Air

Spooks?

SWEDES WATCH SILENT ROCKETS

3 SWEDES DIE AS ROCKET BOMB HITS WAR PLANE

Mystery 'Fire Ball' Stirs Baltimore

RUSSIANS OBSERVE UNUSUAL METEORITE

METEORS FLASH ACROSS SKIES

No Explanation By Astronomers.

Only casually did Thayer make a reference to the possibility that the ghost rockets might be interplanetary visitors and of Fortean members that might prefer that theme. Look under the heading: "Ghosts," on page 242, he wrote in an editorial in issue number sixteen of Doubt. Sure enough on that page there was an account of a Reuters dispatch that told of a "strange luminous figure" wandering remote beach areas at night on Sweden's Tarn Island. Cattle, for some reason, avoided those areas and the lush grass there. Elsewhere in the same issue there were items about a shower of worms during a temporary lull in a storm at Philadelphia, and unexplained light in the sky seen by a couple policemen at Weatherford, Texas, just 13 days after, as Thayer put it, the Navy "misplaced" six airplanes off Florida. (12.)

Eventually Sweden asked American and British experts for help in solving the ghost rocket problem and two American Generals, David Sarnoff and James Doolittle, both well versed in advanced weaponry, traveled to Sweden to confer with the Swedish General Staff.

By October, reports of ghost rockets greatly diminished in number and most people came to accept official hints that hysteria may have been the sole cause of the commotion, however, a most interesting comment had appeared in the New York Times on October 1st. It seems that General Sarnoff had been a guest of honor at a dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel shortly after he returned from Sweden. Sarnoff was honored for his forty years of prominence in the electronics industry and during an after-dinner speech he dwelled on the unstable political conditions in Europe. The Times reported the following, which, though brief, is intriguing: ". . . Mr. Sarnoff told of visiting Sweden recently and said he is convinced that the 'ghost bombs' are no myth but real missiles." (13.)

Sarnoff was not alone with his concern. British Field Marshal Smuts was so alarmed about the ghost rockets he expressed his worries over the BBC, and General Douglas MacArthur in Japan, hearing a rumor that one of the strange missiles may have fallen on English soil, made an inquiry about it through the British military mission in Tokyo. *(14.)

Late in October military representatives from France, England, and the United States, were finally granted access to the Soviet zone of occupied Germany by the reluctant Russians to search for evidence of weapon manufacturing in violation of armistice agreements. Nothing was found, though it was apparent the Soviets could have carted away or carefully hidden anything incriminating. It was a remarkable episode in East-West relations.

The crisis subsided and the sense of urgency passed. The West, led by the United States, went about the development of an adroit and vigilant application of counterforce, both geographical and political, otherwise known as "containment."

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*On page 552 of the book Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects, produced under U.S. government contract, it states flatly that 997 ghost rocket reports were made in Sweden in 1946. Such an exact number, to say nothing of the amount which far exceeds that which has been compiled for known publications, indicates the existence of some sort of official list, or more probably a study, yet to be released for public examination.

The failure to discover evidence of Russian missiles seemed to have no adverse effect on Western weapon development, for Anglo-American research on rockets and the upper atmosphere was accelerated. For instance, the National Bureau of Standards under the direction of Edward U. Condon, assisted other government and military installations in the radar scanning the Giacobini-Zinner meteor shower on October 9, 1946.

As far back as 1932 experts studying radio waves noticed echoes from the region of the earth's ionosphere. Authorities like England's Sir Edward Appleton and R. Naismith pioneered investigations into the problem. Eventually it was proven that meteors passing through the upper atmosphere left electrified trails in the air that could reflect radio signals.

After the invention of radar, it was theorized that electromagnetic waves lengths between five and thirty meters could be expected to fix the exact location of the path of a falling meteor using radar's highly directional capability. (15.)

So, in the fall of 1946, it was decided to test the meteor detection theory on a large scale. In England the British Ministry of Supply Operations Group turned its radar equipment skyward, joining such U.S. installations as the Army Signal Corps instruments at White Sands, New Mexico, and the large, "shoot the Moon," radar set in New Jersey, in a coordinated effort.

Whether this meteor scanning activity had anything to do with the mysterious phenomena reported over Europe is not apparent, but one wonders what the American and British radar experts thought about the "ghost rockets."

On October 10, 1946 the Swedish government announced officially it could only explain 80 percent of the ghost rocket sightings reported during the summer. Many of the unexplained objects had been detected on radar but Swedish authorities hadn't the slightest idea what the things were, and for all we know nothing more was done about the mystery. The announcement was astonishing. It had been officially announced that something, neither natural or man-made, yet solid enough to show up on radar, had been moving about in the atmosphere over Sweden. (16.)

This would not be the last time data of an inexplicable nature in results of an official investigation would be ignored. As might be expected, Charles Fort had something to say about this kind of behavior, for it is one of the central themes of his four books.

Fort admitted that one is tempted to accuse scientists of laziness or feeblemindedness because of their total neglect of unexplained data of a striking nature. The faulty discernability of such learned men he attributed to negative preconceptions. In jest Fort likened the performance of scholars to that of a European, before Columbus, making a feeble effort in a rowboat to reach some rumored lands across the Atlantic, and after a very short time, turning back and exclaiming: "Oh Hell! There ain't no America!" (17.)

Scientists associated with the 1946 ghost rocket investigation may have lacked curiosity, or energy, in conformance to Fort's old accusation, however we must give them more credit than that and consider other reasons for the silence that descended over the ghost rocket mystery. It's conceivable scientists had learned

considerable and were fascinated by the phenomenon, but the study done on the strange objects has a top secret classification.

The July, 1946, issue of Amazing Stories* printed an acknowledgement of the publication's debt to the work of Charles Fort. In a serious tone the editor of Amazing backed up Fort's claim that space ships may be coming and going in the earth's atmosphere on a regular basis, for aside from Fort's writings, the editor alluded to numerous letters he had received from returning servicemen about similar phenomenon seen during the war. The editor went on to state that a person would be deceiving himself if he thought: ". . .responsible parties in the world governments are ignorant of the fact of spaceships visiting the earth. . . ." (18.)

It didn't seem significant at the time but the United States had a mystery of its own in August near Grants Pass, Oregon. Red and green lights, so intense that they were compared to flares, were spotted in the air between the Serpentine and Onion mountain peaks. For thirty minutes the lights swayed in the atmosphere accompanied by odd towering clouds. Oregon police called the lights very mysterious after a check failed to show there was any missing aircraft that might be dropping flares. (19.) The Grants Pass Daily Courier quoted both the Civil Aeronautics Administration and Army Air Force officials when they denied that the lights could have been flares dropped from aircraft, for the colors red and green were not authorized for flights over land. Nothing was said, however, about how flares could stay suspended in the air for half an hour, or what else the lights might be. (20.)

Clippings on the Grants Pass mystery were sent to Tiffany Thayer who mentioned the episode in the Fortean publication, humorously warning the readers of Doubt to place their caviar under guard since those "Damned Reds" might be up to something. (21.)

Besides the incident at Grants Pass, there were other reports of unusual phenomena seen in the sky.

Witnesses in Europe had not only reported rocket-like objects in 1946, but fiery ball-like things that closely resembled meteors. These fireballs, however, flew too low and slow to be taken for natural bolides. Such fireballs now appeared over the U.S. For example, a fireball passed slowly over Wilmington, North Carolina and disappeared to the northeast about 7:25 p.m. on August 24, 1946. About fifteen minutes later the same fireball, or one very similar, passed over Durham, North Carolina, headed southeast. (22.) A purple ball of fire cruised over Philomath, Oregon on an eastward course on September 6th. (23.) The same day a red ball of light was seen moving about very low and slow over New Orleans, Louisiana. (24.)

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*The back cover of the August, 1946 issue of Amazing Stories has an interesting fictional illustration showing a group of "flying saucers" in V-formation. Actually the "flying saucer" design is not very modern for it dates back at least to 1918 when the science-fantasy magazine Electrical Experimenter featured a saucer-like ship on the cover of its March edition to illustrate R.&G. Winthrop's novelette "At War With the Invisible."

And then something very odd happened the night of October 9, 1946, at San Diego, California. On the night of the 9th people all over the nation were outdoors watching for the meteor shower that marked the approach of the Giacobini-Zinner comet. During the meteor display "something" appeared near the Moon in the dark evening sky over San Diego. One of the witnesses of the strange object was a medium named Mark Probert, who immediately got in touch with Meade Layne, head of the previously mentioned Borderland Research group. Layne, also a member of the Fortean Society, asked Probert to attempt psychic contact with the object in the sky.

The report that apparently got the ball rolling on the psychic contact business was probably the following that was phoned to a Los Angeles radio station: "You must think I'm a nut, but I know what I saw. . .[and] I'm sure it wasn't a shooting star. It looked like a rocket ship, trying to make contact. . . ." (25.) Further reports later printed in the press stated that the "thing" in the sky first appeared to the right of the Moon around 8 p.m. At least one witness claimed the object resembled a bullet in shape and when it moved off it: ". . .left a thin vapor trail behind it. . . ." (26.) An amateur astronomer by the name of Bob Stevenson said of the object that the: ". . .shape was hard to make out but seemed slightly crescent in outline." (27.)

Yet another witness was a person who would later become a memorable figure in the UFO controversy.

Eight p.m. that very night just north of San Diego, at the small community of Palomar Gardens located at the base of Palomar mountain, a Mr. George Adamski was watching the dark sky. Adamski, an amateur astronomer, had made his home at Palomar Gardens apparently because he found himself attracted to Palomar mountain. On the mountain's summit the world's largest telescope was nearing the final stages of construction. The new telescope was to be twice as big as any previous instrument, a 200 inch engineering marvel many scientists felt might unravel major secrets of the universe.

Although Adamski was intrigued with science, the philosphical meaning of it all seems to have fascinated him more, for he was the leader of a religious-philosophic cult that called itself the "Royal Order of Tibet."

As Adamski was scanning the night sky hoping to see the previously mentioned meteor display, on October 9th, he also, he later claimed, saw something near the Moon. After the strange object disappeared from sight, Adamski said he went indoors and turned on the radio and heard a news broadcaster tell of other sightings of the mystery object. There could be no doubt Adamski checked the newspapers the next day to learn more for we know that Adamski had earlier read of the impressive technical feat U.S. scientists had achieved nine months before, when a radar signal had been bounced off the moon, (28.) man's first contact with another world, and to a person of Adamski's interest the following question must have popped into his mind: did the radar signal disturb anyone

up there?*

Sometime between October 10th and the 11th, an alleged message received by Mark Probert on the evening of the 9th was given to the press. The Los Angeles Daily News thought the message made a good story and headlined its article on the incident: "Are Men From Mars Knocking?" According to the story there was a machine in the sky called a "Kareeta" piloted by creatures from outer space that were seeking contact with earthmen, but wary of the hostile instincts of mankind. The pilots of the "Kareeta" according to Probert, sought a meeting with earth scientists at an isolated location. (29.)

Tiffany Thayer, who was sent news clippings on the episode, felt that the newspapers served up quite enough fiction as it was, and noted the whole business with a sneer, proposing in jest that the so-called bashful extramundanians might yet land and close in on the White House in droves. (30.)

This introduces the "contactee" problem, a sort of updated version of the "Magonia" legend.

The idea of noble aliens from some mysterious heavenly realm is not a modern aberration. As far back as the eighteenth century, men like the Swedish mystic Swedenborg were spreading a gospel about beings living on other planets who had reached the apex of wisdom, developing a scientific civilization in tranquility. (31.) Such beliefs follow a well-established psychological pattern of wishful thinking. The core of such early stories is the claim that "no one lives [in those other worlds] threatened by destruction." Swedenborg's essays, like others of the time, were essentially metaphysical dissertations without much attention to alien's spatial existence. By the late 1900s the situation was reversed. Full attention of such speculation was being given to spatial matters, the discovery of "canals" on Mars, etc., to the exclusion of Swedenborg's spirit-like worlds. This lasted until science created the threat of a nuclear Armegeddon.

By the Second World War the supreme deity as pictured by the Bible had lost importance in many personal philosophies. God had become, to many people, simply the "Prime Mover," a being that had set clouds of hydrogen in motion eons ago after establishing the basic rules of atomic interaction and then paying no more heed to his creation. It had become difficult for a "modern" man to believe in a divine spirit that would listen to humble supplications, or influence events for the sake of one individual. On the other hand, the great disaster of two world wars since the beginning of the century had also diminished faith in human institutions.

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*In a book authored by him in 1961, Flying Saucers Farewell, Adamski refers to the 1946 radar signal sent to the Moon. He mistakenly wrote that the February test had occurred in October, evidently confusing it with the radar scan of the Giacobini-Zinner meteor shower. According to Adamski, space people he allegedly met in the early 1950s told him that the 1946 Moon radar probe had bounced off that orb, eventually reaching receiving stations on Mars and Venus. Aliens living on the two planets thought the signal was a cry for help so they sent fleets of flying saucers to investigate, the saucers arriving in force over the West Coast of the U.S. in June, 1947.

After the second world conflict the situation threatened to become more depressing than ever, with the invention of the atomic bomb and increasing signs that international political problems had not been resolved.

While no miracles could be expected from the world of reality, the situation was made to order for Amazing Stories magazine. During the summer of 1946 author Harold M. Sherman worked on a story for a fall issue of Amazing. The hero of Sherman's science fiction tale was a visitor from outer space who possessed great power and wisdom, and while many science fiction writers were still under the spell of H.G. Wells' conception of aliens from other worlds as being ugly monsters, Sherman made only a minor physical concession in portraying the alien as different from humans, and that was the color of the being's green skin. The close likeness of the alien to humans was important to the subconscious appeal of the resulting story.

The October issue of Amazing appeared on the newstands with Sherman's tale, "The Green Man," featured on the cover. The plot was concerned with the reception mankind gives to a Messiah-like being from another world.

To start off, a professor of astronomy is depicted motoring down a mountain road in southern California. It is late at night because the professor has spent the evening giving a lecture to a group of colleagues at the Mount Wilson Observatory about the possibility of other worlds in space being the abodes of intelligent life. Suddenly an invisible beam of energy directed at the professor's car paralyzes the engine and brings the vehicle to a halt. Unaware of what actually happened and unable to start his car, the elderly scholar gets out and starts to walk.

After walking a few paces, the professor only then notices a large, silver, cigar-shaped object,* floating in the air behind some trees. And then from an opening in the hovering object there emerged an impressive figure garbed in a loose fitting robe. The creature appeared to be a normal male human with the exception of a green complexion. The alien approached the startled professor and asked him to be a special intermediary between mankind and the alien's own civilization.

Later, after the world at large learned of its guest from the universe and the trauma of the event wore off, curious crowds that went to see the man from outer space were won over by the alien's benign disposition. Sherman depicts his alien as a type of holy man, the Christ-like similarity extending even to the Green Man's ability to heal the sick by a mere touch, the curative power leaping from the being's fingertips in the form of a special electrical energy.

The strange alien and his human assistant, the professor, were eventually entertained by the government and quizzed as to the Green Man's intentions. The extramundane creature met with suspicions, of course, that he was the vanguard of a hostile invasion. At this point in the story, Sherman has one U.S. Senator explain to the alien what happened when Orson Wells broadcast the Martian

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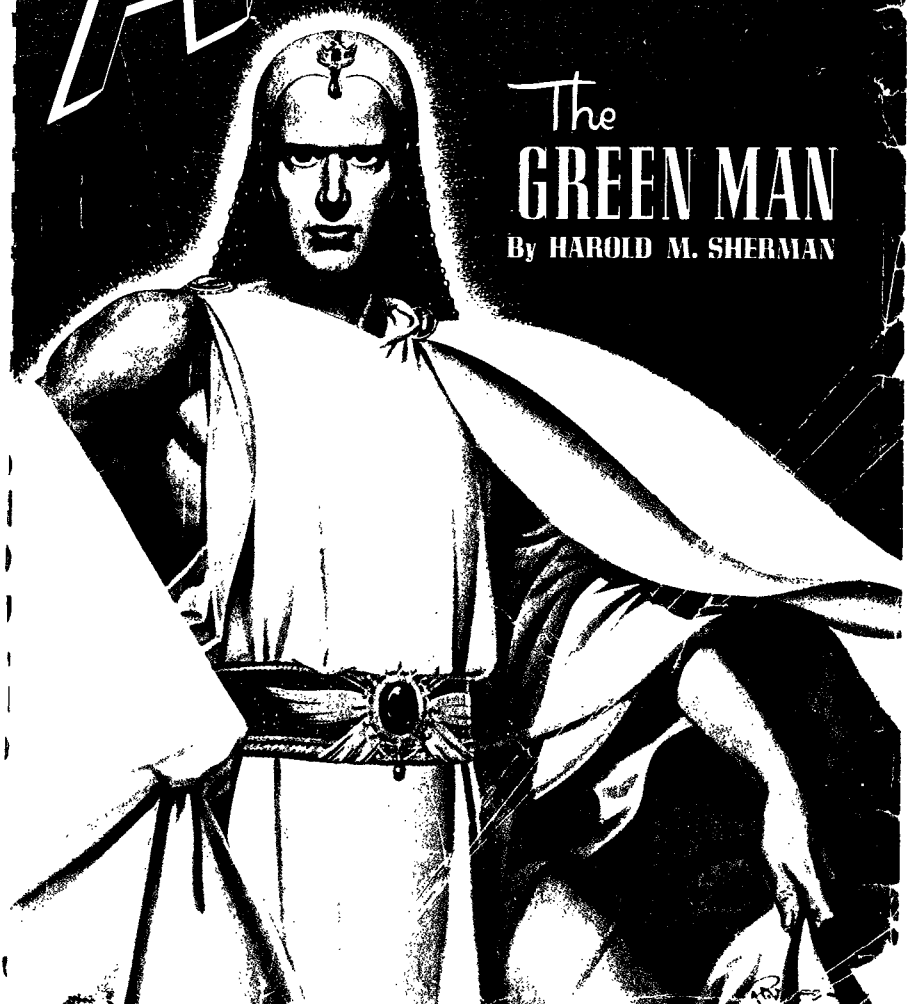
*A ghost rocket? It is possible Sherman had been inspired by the unexplained phantom missiles seen over Europe that summer?

AMAZING STORIES

The GREEN MAN

By HAROLD M. SHERMAN



invasion program back in 1938. The benevolent ambassador from the Milky Way assured the nervous legislator. The alien, or "Numar" as he was called, told the Senator, and everyone else, that he had come to the planet earth only to act as an "awakener," a harbinger of the advent of a change in the thinking of mankind that would soon have the squabbling nations on earth working together in peace and friendship with a cosmic outlook. (32.)

George Adamski penned his own science fiction story very similar to Sherman's "Green Man," but in his version, instead of an alien it is Jesus Christ that lands in a spaceship. The story was submitted to Amazing Stories in 1946 but was rejected.(33.)

In May, 1950 Adamski started taking pictures of the Moon through a telescope and, so he claimed glowing images of UFOs began to show up on his photographs. Supposedly Adamski had been lucky enough to catch some spacecraft hovering in front of the lunar disc. (34.) And then, on November 24,1952, a bizarre story appeared in the Phoenix, Arizona, Gazette about Adamski. The Gazette printed some claims by Adamski which declared that the California occult leader had met face-to-face with a pilot of a spaceship that had touched down for a short time at a remote location in California's Mojave desert. By some stroke of good fortune Adamski just happened to be at the landing site at the right time. He communicated with the alien and made friends, asking the being where he was from and what his mission was. Adamski described his new-found friend from the firmament as a benign, human-like, creature with an angelic face framed by golden brown, shoulder-length hair. As for clothes, the being was dressed in a simple one-piece jumpsuit.

The reason for the meeting between Adamski and the alien(somehow this had been arranged in some psychic manner) was the making known of a "good news" message of spacemen arriving just in time to save human civilization from self destruction. (35.)

Needless to say at this point, Adamski's yarn sounds too similar to Harold Sherman's tale "The Green Man" to ignore the strong possibility the unusual California occult leader had been inspired by the story in Amazing magazine.

Unfortunately, Adamski's "Numar" didn't stick around to plea for peace among the nations of earth, but Adamski was only too glad to spread the word himself.

While we're at it, we might inject some similar information that has a relationship to Sherman's story.

It so happens that Charles Fort wrote a number of comments in regards to the reactions of alien visitors to human civilization. Fort did not endorse the bellicose theory made famous by H.G. Wells, nor did he consider the messiah concept later proposed by Harold Sherman. Instead, his thinking was guided by the data he had compiled on strange things seen in the sky as it was recorded in newspapers and various publications. Besides what is probably the best known of Fort's ideas on the matter: "I think we're property," he left us several others. For example, as for Sherman's story line which contends that a superior race from the stars would try to mend the ways of humans, one of Fort's comments disputes such a view. Fort states that mankind might be avoided, being under a moral quarantine, a suggestion that no doubt sounds sensible to many readers. But Fort did make a concession to the possibility that

aliens from space might land and mingle with humans. He wrote that if one allowed for the possibility that the mysterious objects being reported in the sky year after year were from other worlds, then it was conceivable that the crews of such craft have landed and have established spy nests in the major cities on earth. (36.)

Wise in the ways of human nature Fort anticipated events like that proposed in the story "The Green Man," so he wrote:

> If beings, like human beings from somewhere else, should land upon this earth, near New York, and parade up Broadway, and then sail away, somebody, a year or so later, would "confess" that it had been a hoax by him and some companions, who had dressed up for their parts, and jabbered, as they thought extramundanians should jabber, New Yorkers would say that from the first they had suspected something wrong. Whoever heard of distinguished foreigners coming to New York, and not trying to borrow something? Or not coinciding with propaganda in the newspapers? (37.)

Chapter Seven

"Flying Saucers"

Europe made news once again on November 16, 1946, but no rockets were mentioned. It seems a mysterious explosion in the air over the center of Stockholm, Sweden, knocked people flat in a 100 yard radius. (1.) Sweden, however, was due to yield its distinction as the current world leader in experiencing extraordinary aerial phenomena, for Seattle, Washington, in the United States, was just then trying to explain six mysterious blasts in the air that had taken place in a 24-hour period. (2.)

And then from that part of the world to the northwest of Seattle came the following report:

> London, Nov. 20 (AP)—The Moscow radio reported Wednesday that a meteor which resembled "a white-hot flying cannon ball" was sighted at Providence bay, at the northeast tip of Siberia across the Bering Strait from Alaska.
>
> "The meteor was observed for twenty-two seconds at a height of twenty-five degrees from the horizon," the report said. "Its velocity was relatively low, far below that of falling stars. The meteor was of a reddish-violet color and its huge tail was light blue."
>
> The radio description, particularly as to velocity, coincided to some degree to that of meteor-like objects sighted above Scandinavian countries in recent months. (3.)

Although the"flying cannon ball" seen by the Russians seemed to be just a slow moving meteor, one can't help but wonder if there was any connection with the following report. According to an account published at a later date, a large, dark, sphere was seen rising out of the ocean near the Aleutian Islands in March, 1945. Witnesses to the event were supposed to have been the crew of the U.S.S. Delarof. The large mystery sphere was said to have risen out of the sea, and then flown a circle around the Delarof before flying away. (4.)

As 1946 came to a close, unusual meteors began to alarm the United States. Scandinavia had been troubled by similar problems in February, and by June the European "meteor" problem had developed into the ghost rocket mystery. Would there be an American "ghost rocket" panic by the summer of 1947? The emotional element, it seems, was present. On December 1, 1946, a spectacular meteor rattled more than windows in Longview, California. A woman telephoned the Longview police department and exclaimed: ". . .the air is full of rockets and bombs! We are being attacked! What shall we do!" (5.)

Nine days later the American midwest was subject to a meteor shower that caused even more confusion.

Airport officials, police departments, and astronomers, were deluged with reports from frenzied witnesses. Reports of loud whistlings in the heavens, strange balls of fire, and flaming airplanes were made. The phenomenon was transitory, therefore so

was the excitement.

January 6, 1947 found England's Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery in Moscow for a high level visit. Other than Stalin's outspoken mistrust for the recent Anglo-American agreement of a "standardization of defense" which the suspicious old fox of the Kremlin made Marshal Mongomery go to great lengths to define, the Russians seemed friendly enough for the moment.

Making a mental survey of the condition of the war ravaged countryside, Marshal Montgomery reported to his government that the Communists might not be ready for an aggressive move for another 15 to 20 years. (6.)

While the Russians' leaders were toasting Marshal Montgomery with vodka in Moscow, the commandant of a Portland, Oregon military academy came close to being bashed on the noggin by a chunk of "something" that had dropped down out of a clear blue sky, along with a number of egg-sized hailstones. Oddly, only an area of 15 square feet was affected by this queer cloudless "weather" phenomenon. The Academy's headmaster told a Portland newspaper, the Oregonian, that the strange chunk of dark material that nearly struck him had a jacket of ice, and hit with such force it rebounded six feet high. According to an Oregon state geologist, the unidentified mass was composed of eleven different metals, but that no analysis gave a clue to what it was, or where it came from. (7.)

It had been a warm clear day when the unusual fall had occurred, and it immediately became obvious an airplane might have dropped the ice, but the CAA authorities confirmed the fact that no airplanes had been over the campus area at the right hour of the day, so during the short span of days in which official investigators examined various theories, the Oregonian did some research on its own. On January 7th the Oregonian suggested that long-range rockets from the White Sands missile testing range in New Mexico might be responsible, adding that the landing bases for the Swedish ghost rockets had never been discovered so there might be a connection. The Commander of the White Sands range was contacted but he denied that his installation could have sent aloft a rocket that could have reached Portland. (8.)

U.S. Army Air Force Intelligence officers then showed up and asked to see the mysterious chunk of metal. The Oregonian reported: "[the] president of the academy said the army representative to whom he relinquished the object offered little explanation of the army's interest, beyond saying that it was wanted 'for examination.'" (9.)

The Oregonian proved to be well informed and reminded its readers that a man named Charles Fort believed he had discovered proof of unexplained things cruising the earth's atmosphere fifty years before. The Oregonian asked; ". . .who on earth—or the moon—is upstairs anyway?" (10.)

Tiffany Thayer received the Oregonian news stories on the Portland excitement from Society members and he savored the brief Fortean acknowledgement, but to expect much more one would have to be an optimist to say the least.

A further U.S. Army Air Force communiqué quickly slapped down

any notion the freak occurrence at Portland could be, by any stretch of the imagination, connected with the Swedish ghost rockets. (11.)

Things were quiet for a while in the American Press until March 22, 1947 when the New York Times reported that the mysterious ghost rockets had returned to European skies. (12.)

The report by the Times may well have prompted the following remark by the editor of Amazing Stories, who lectured his readers in the magazine's April issue: "Does it take a fiction magazine like Amazing Stories to stress the importance of not taking these [UFO] 'mysteries' lightly?" (13.)

The Russians had been repeatedly accused by the European press as being responsible for the ghost rockets, if true a scientific feat that Western experts would find very alarming. There was one advanced V-2 rocket design that had something of the potential of the reported ghost rockets and it was a long-range, antipodal, rocket glider dreamed up by a German missile expert named Eugene Sanger; however, the design did not come to Stalin's attention until April, 1947. When Stalin did learn of the long-range missile, he grasped the significance of the weapon and summoned a conference of his top advisers. That same month, in a secret room in the Kremlin, Stalin met with Molotov, Malenkov, and Beria; also present were Stalin's son Vassili, and the Soviet Generals Voznesenski and Voroshilov. The group listened quietly for a while to a couple of Soviet experts describing the history of the German rocket program. The experts, the Soviet Army colonels Serov and Tokaty-Tokaev, had spent considerable time discussing the Nazi V-2 and its 250 mile range, when Malenkov, his patience running short snapped, "Who can we frighten with it? Poland?" Stalin hushed Malenkov and asked the military aides to move on to the Sanger rocket design that held some promise in being able to circumnavigate the globe.

After the lecture Stalin ordered his son Vassili and the rocket expert Tokaty-Tokaev to travel secretly to Western-occupied Germany where Sanger was believed to be living, and persuade the German scientist to come to the Soviet Union and continue his work on the long-range missile.

After months of fruitless effort to find Sanger, Vassili and Colonel Tokaty-Tokaev returned to Moscow. Such was the Russian intercontinental missile program in the spring of 1947. Colonel Tokaty-Tokaev defected to the West in 1948 and told Western Intelligence about the "Sanger rocket meeting." (14.)

Experts in the West were aware of the Sanger rocket design, though they did not know what the Russians were up to in the spring of 1947. The mysterious ghost rocket activity in 1946 had no doubt meant many sleepless nights for Western Intelligence experts, but as yet there was no indication the Soviet scientists could reach North America, the heartland of democracy, nevertheless the Pentagon was soon due for a jolt because the Sanger rocket glider was supposed to move the atmosphere with a rising and falling motion like "skipping a flat stone over water."

On May 19, 1947, the Del Salto Observatory in Chile detected the presence of what it called a "strange meteor" in the heavens over Santiago. The object: ". . .moved slowly through the ionosphere, producing at intervals discharges of whitish smoke." Also: ". . .

this strange meteor remained for a certain time and then crossed the horizon at a considerable speed." (15.) Observatory officials felt that: ". . .owing to the fantastic character of the phenomenon it was decided not to reveal this observation. . . ." (16.) Later, on July 11th, observatory officials finally notified the press. The reason for this turnabout will be apparent when we discuss the events of July.

Back in the U.S. Fortean R. DeWitt Miller put together a selection of his Coronet articles for a book titled Forgotten Mysteries, in the spring of 1947, telling of ghosts, vanished people, lost cities, sea serpents and such. Charles Fort was only briefly mentioned, although Mr. Miller was careful to credit Fort as the man who was the first to dare assert that the planet earth had "guests." Yet the total effect was that the strange Bronx author remained a little honored prophet, probably to be stuck in books like Forgotten Mysteries indefinitely, sandwiched between Nostradamas and the survivors of Lemuria, amid the latest speculation on the Pyramid of Gizeh, sharing the stage with the Loch Ness Monster, holding hands with the Abominable Snowman, and moving over for the vast stonework of Sacsahauman. (17.)

Amazing Stories devoted its entire June, 1947, issue to the "true" spaceman-subterranean story as related by the magazine's special correspondent, a fellow that claimed some kind of "psychic understanding" of the secret doings of these undetected alien civilizations. All of this correspondent's articles in the June Issue dealt with the antics of the alleged underground beings, and just why the spacemen were ignored is not clear. However, the editor of Amazing got an author-member of the Fortean Society to write a two-page spread on the spaceman angle for inclusion in the June issue. The resulting article was titled: "Visitors from the Void." The author, Fortean writer Vincient Gaddis, penned an accounting of the phantom airplane newspaper clippings gathered by Tiffany Thayer during the 1930s. (18.) The editor of Amazing had a 50-50 chance of being right on top of one of the biggest news stories of the year, yet just about all of his money, unfortunately, was riding on the theme of the subterraneans.

A prominent Fortean, Alex Saunders, wrote some time ago:

> I still remember vividly a certain June day. I had returned home from work, had my supper, and was relaxing with a newspaper when an item caught my eye and literally froze me solid. . .Heart pounding, I cut out the clipping and promptly mailed it to Tiffany Thayer. . . How the mystery affected me! I was on pins and needles with excitement. (19.)

Saunders knew that the evidence had always been within the pages of Charles Fort's books and he now thought: "". . .things were happening—fast!" He earnestly believed: ". . .the solution was finally close at hand." (20.)

Something had happened the day before in the skies of the State of Washington.

At Pendleton, Oregon, late in the afternoon of June 24th, the weather was clear with the exception of some rain over the mountains to the east. At the city airport preparations were being

made to welcome a 60 plane air fleet, a tri-state air tour to promote private aviation by business concerns, which was due the next morning. Everything was routine until the phone rang at the airport office. calling was the airport at Yakima, Washington, to notify Pendleton about a particular plane that would soon arrive there. A Yakima airport official said over the phone that if anyone wanted to hear about some strange new "aircraft" they should check with the pilot of the Callair due to land at Pendleton within the hour.

When the Callair arrived the pilot, a Kenneth Arnold, was mobbed by a large crowd. Everyone wanted to hear about some "tailless jets." Arnold said that before touching down at Yakima, Washington, enroute to Pendleton, he had been in the air over Mineral, Washington, about 3 o'clock, headed east, when a string of objects caught his attention crossing his path some fifty miles away on a southward course, following snow-blanketed ridge of the Cascade range:

> The first thing I noticed was a series of flashes in my eyes as if a mirror was reflecting sunlight at me. . . I saw the flashes were coming from a series of objects that were traveling incredibly fast. They were silvery and shiny and seemed to be shaped like a pie plate. (21.)

Arnold was unable to see any tails on the strange "aircraft" and he thought that very peculiar. Alerted to the possibility he was witnessing something highly unusual, Arnold gave the objects his full attention:

> I counted nine of them as they disappeared behind the peak of Mount Ranier. Their speed was apparently so great I decided to clock them. I took out my watch and checked off one minute and 42 seconds from the time they passed Mount Ranier until they reached the peak of Mount Adams. . . . All told the objects remained in view slightly less than two minutes from the time I first noticed them. (22.)

While the physical description was strange (flying wings were at that time being tested by the military), interest focused on the amazing speed of the "jets." Calculations made by Arnold were checked and rechecked, and after much discussion an estimation of some 1,200 miles per hour seemed inescapable. The airmen were stunned by the figures. (23.) A new world speed record for aircraft had just been announced June 20th. At Muroc, California, a Lockheed jet P-80 had reached a speed of 623 mph, a figure only half that of the "tailless jets" Arnold claimed to have clocked.

The Portland Oregon Daily Journal carried the following about Arnold's discussion with the other pilots at Pendleton: "Some of the pilots thought it over and said it was possible [said Arnold]. Some of them guessed that I had seen some secret guided missiles. People began asking me if I thought they were missiles sent over the North Pole." (24.)

Arnold eventually left the crowd at the airport to go to his

hotel and get some rest, temporarily satisfied that the eerie formation of "tailless craft" must have been a test of Uncle Sam's latest missile. Like the other airmen, Arnold was impressed most of all by the objects' incredible speed. Nothing human,Arnold was sure, could have survived the violent movements of the mysterious objects as they skipped along,therefore the things must have been some kind of radio-controlled missile.

The following morning every plane of the tri-state air fleet had arrived at Pendleton's municipal airport by 9 o'clock and all of the pilots met in the local VFW hall for breakfast. The pilots were in jovial spirits. When the main speaker rose to give his address, he was set upon by some men in white coats and strapped in a straitjacket while the audience howled with laughter. If you're wondering if it was Arnold that was tied up you're wrong. The strange aircraft reported the day before had been forgotten by everyone but Arnold who still retained a nagging curiosity. Late in the morning Arnold was downtown when a gentleman stopped him in the street and brought up the subject of the "mystery missiles" once again. He said he was from the city of Ukiah and had seen a similar formation of "mystery missiles" the same day, June 24th, in the sky over his home. The gentleman added that the strange objects would weave and threaten to break out of alignment as they flew through the air. (25.)

The encounter with a man who also claimed to have seen the strange"aircraft" enboldened Arnold. Before leaving for Boise, Arnold gathered together his courage and went over to the office of the East Oregonian, Pendleton's only newspaper. It was noon time as Arnold timidly walked into the East Oregonian building and asked to talk to someone in the news department. Nolan Skiff, who wrote the "End of the Week" column, invited the flyer to have a chair by his desk and listened as Arnold slowly began to describe what had happened the 24th over the Cascades. At first Mr. Skiff thought Arnold might be a kook, but as the flyer's story unfolded the sincerity with which it was told quickly overcame any doubts about Arnold's honesty. Arnold freely admitted it was a fantastic story, yet he said he had to believe his own eyes. The "missiles" traveled, Arnold remarked, like a flat rock bouncing along the surface of water, a rising and falling motion (undulatory flight).

Another staff member, Bill Bequette, had been taking down Arnold's story and believed it might have national interest. The East Oregonian was hooked up with the news wire of Associated Press so Bequette sent a short message out on the teletype, pausing at the point which called for a name for the phenomenon. Thinking of the motion of objects Bequette spelled out "flying saucers." (26.)

Hundreds of newspapers picked up the Arnold flying saucer story and carried it on the lower half of their front pages. Immediately, dozens of persons contacted the press to tell of similar sightings made by them that same day or earlier in the month. People said they had been afraid to say something, or had thought nothing of it, believing the objects were government devices.

Kenneth Arnold's sighting received some support from a member of the Washington State forest service who had been on fire watch

at a lookout tower at Diamond Gap, a small settlement near the town of Salmon, just south of Mount Rainier. About three o'clock the afternoon of June 24th the forest service lookout noticed something in the sky which he said were: ". . .flashes in the distance quite high up in the east [and they] . . .seemed to be going in a straight line and made a strange noise, higher pitched than most airplanes make." (27.)

Arnold hung around the East Oregonian office until June 27th, watching the AP teletype tapping away, spewing out dozens and dozens of flying disc sightings, but the information he patiently waited for, a satisfactory answer to the mystery, did not appear.

A Portland newspaper reporter phoned Arnold in Pendleton and asked if the saucers had not been reflections within the cockpit or an illusion created by the glare off the snow on the slopes of Mount Rainier. The Boise flyer, a little upset, repeated his story in detail and stressed that he wasn't trying to gain notoriety.

The Portland Oregonian published the telephone interview which included Arnold's remarks on some exasperating results of the increasing excitement:

> [Arnold]. . .said a preacher called him from Texas and informed him that the strange objects Arnold claimed to have seen batting through the ozone actually were harbingers of doomsday.
>
> Arnold said he didn't get the preacher's name during their phone conversation, but the minister said he was getting his flock'ready for the end of this world.'
>
> That was unnerving, according to Arnold, but it wasn't half as disconcerting as the episode in a Pendleton cafe.
>
> Arnold said a woman rushed in, took one look at him and then dashed out shrieking, 'There's the man who saw the men from Mars,' She rushed out of the eating place 'sobbing that she would have to do something for the children,' Arnold added with a shudder." (28.)

Arnold snapped to another reporter: "This whole thing has gotten out of hand. I want to talk to the FBI or someone." (29.)

Panic, however, was rare. Consider the following that occurred at Walter, Oklahoma. The press reported that on the night of June 25th a man happened to notice some strange objects in the sky over Walter. The news account read: "He watched them 'flying around and around each other' for about 30 minutes, he said. Then he went to bed." The news story continued: ". . .[he] thought about waking up some of. . .[his] neighbors but decided if it meant the end of the world they would be just about as happy sleeping when the world ended." (30.)

Back at Pendleton Arnold went to a photography shop and purchased a $150 movie camera. And then he told Bill Bequette of the East Oregonian that if any of those baffling saucers dared show themselves again he would at least catch them on film. With that, Arnold left Pendleton for his home at Boise Idaho. (31.) After Arnold had departed the East Oregonian editorialized on the nationwide saucer invasion and stated that whatever the objects were,

they had better be American. (32.)

When Arnold arrived at Boise in his plane, he was met by the press, and still disturbed by the apparent disinterest of the authorities he declared: "If I was running the country and someone reported something unusual, I'd certainly want to know more about it." (33.)

It wasn't long before persons came forward to give Arnold's story support from experiences of their own that predated the June 24th episode by a considerable period of time. The Oregon Daily Journal, for example, printed the following: "Lloyd Kenyon . . .reported he first saw the discs while in the Russell Islands [in the Pacific] in 1943. He was aboard a ship at the time and said several others saw the objects traveling at an unbelievable speed. . .he reported it to intelligence officers who contended the objects were meteors. . .but [Kenyon said] they certainly looked as though they might be some kind of plane." (34.)

Meade Layne mailed postcards to all the members of the Borderland Research Organization on June 29th, notifying them that the flying saucers were not from Mars but were from some kind of "etheric world." A "trance control" was responsible for the idea and Layne suggested that the "Karreeta, similarly contacted nine months before, might also be of "etheric construction."

For the record, at Norwood, Ohio, in the early morning hours of June 30th, a housewife said she saw one very large saucer and six smaller sized ones in the dark sky. This particular case is mentioned because of the fascinating series of similar "mother ship" reports made later in the Norwood area in 1949. (35.)

Also on June 30th, another newspaper, this time in Wyoming, ran an item about a local man who told of his sighting strange balls of fire in the air over Germany during the war. By this time things had quieted down to a level where there were few sightings and indifferent press coverage.

From the missile test range at White Sands, New Mexico, the military issued a carefully worded, but not very convincing, explanation of the saucers apparently in an attempt to calm the public. The military used the magic words "astronomical phenomena" that, in the year 1946 had helped people forget the European ghost rocket controversy. (36.)

UFO sightings had slacked off to such an extent by July 2nd many felt the "flying saucer fad" had run its course. The United Press rushed to get a comment from Orson Welles before interest totally died, and out of Hollywood came a news story headlined: WELLES THINKS FLYING SAUCERS WILL FIZZLE OUT." Orson would prove a poor prophet. Reporters said of him:

> Orson Welles, who once "scared the shirts" off Americans with an invasion from Mars broadcast, said today he didn't have a thing to do with the flying saucers.
>
> "Once actor-producer-director-writer, currently making 'MacBeth,' pointed out that during his 1938 radio hoax dozens of Americans reported seeing space ships landing.
>
> "People are imaginative and gullible," he said. "I'll bet 10 to one this will fizzle out." (37.)

The news media need not have hurried to get Welles' opinion

because on July 3rd the number of UFO reports began a dramatic increase.

One unusual"saucer" sighting took place at Redding, California, on July 3rd when a man and his wife spotted a large, shining, "flying triangle" moving swiftly and silently in a northerly direction. (38.)

The same day another report of interest concerned an incident at the Naval Auxiliary Air Station at Santa Rosa, California. The Santa Rosa Press-Democrat called the case a startling development because the witness was a trained observer. The witness told the Press-Democrat:

> I noticed it first a few minutes before 5 p.m., on Thursday. From my location, it seemed to be about 1,000 feet above the main north-south runway at the airfield, and I would judge that it was 15 to 20 feet in diameter . . .it was impossible to judge size and distance accurately, because there was nothing about the object that enabled me to make an accurate approximation of size.
>
> It was the shape of a giant pocket watch, without the stem, and it was covered by silver material that looked like airplane aluminum. There were no marks of any sort on the surface. It was perfectly smooth.
>
> The object was moving at about the speed of a glider in normal flight attitude, and indeed on my first glimpse I automatically recorded it in my mind as a glider.
>
> But an instant later I realized that there was something strange about it and looked back. Then I noted that it had no wings, no apparent projections of any sort.
>
> It moved smoothly in a northerly direction until it reached the north end of the runway, then turned to the east, banking slightly and headed toward Santa Rosa. I was forced to turn my attention away from it for a moment, and when I looked again it was gone.
>
> From my observation, I would believe that the object was controlled in its flight, either directly or by gyro-control. Its only deviation from a straight path was for wind currents, and after tipping or rising with a current it would recover its level flying position.
>
> The recovery was made in much the same manner as a glider appears to recover when a thermal current forces one wing up or down. At the same time, the return to normal was accompanied by an overcompensation effect which is typical of gyro-control. (39.)

The witness would not say the object was a "flying saucer," just that it was something he had never seen before in all the years he had spent around airports. Although he was known to the Press-Democrat, he refused to let his name be publicized. Also, he said that he had not put any credence in flying disc sightings because he felt he was too intelligent for such nonsense, but after his own experience he had to admit there was something to the mystery.

The day after the foregoing report appeared in the Press-Democrat the newspaper was contacted by another witness who was not reluctant

to be identified. The Press-Democrat printed the second account:

> Confirmation of a report by a trained observer who Monday revealed for the first time the detailed description of one seen hovering over the navy air station came from Dr. R. W. Nelson, a dentist. His description of the mysterious object tallied closely with that given by the first observer who preferred to remain unidentified.
>
> Dr. Nelson said that he saw the object about 5 p.m. while he was gazing out a window on the ground story of his residence. He estimated that it was about 50 feet in diameter. "There it was," he said, "with a beautiful silvery luminous sheen."
>
> He explained that the object had a "silvery luster" as distinguished from a shiny appearance.
>
> The object fluttered like a leaf, headed northwest and disappeared while he watched. (40.)

By July 3rd it seemed that authorities were finally going to heed the plea made by Kenneth Arnold to take the flying saucers seriously. An Army Air Force spokesman announced: "If some foreign power is sending flying discs over the United States, it is our responsibility to know about it and take proper action." (41.)

Chapter Eight

The July Crisis

It seemed like it was going to be a routine Fourth of July holiday. Things were fairly quiet in downtown Portland, Oregon, with most of the businesses closed and Portlanders in general taking their ease in the hot July sun. At midday, in the parking lot of the city police department, Patrolman K. McDowell took delight in a flock of hungry pigeons as he scattered bird seed over the warm asphalt. The birds pecked away at seed oblivious to anything else. Suddenly, for no apparent reason, the birds became alarmed. Patrolman McDowell looked skyward, and high in the sky he spotted: ". . .five discs speeding overhead [and] . . .dipping up and down in an oscillating motion." McDowell dashed inside the station house to tell the police dispatcher. All patrol cars were immediately alerted by radio, and within a few moments two different mobile units reported seeing the saucer-shaped objects. People in the streets also caught sight of the discs as a large number of silvery, fluttering, saucer-shaped objects were clearly visible crisscrossing the sky over the city. The objects banked, rose, fell, circled, zoomed off, and then returned. Clusters formed and then split up. Harbor patrolmen radioed in from the dock area, saying the discs could be seen from there. (1.) Shortly thereafter, Sheriff Deputies across the Columbia River in Washington saw no less than twenty of the discs speeding north in a chain formation. Deputy Sheriff Fred Krives said the discs were strung out in evenly spaced intervals and appeared to be "slewing off to the side." The discs were in sight for about a minute and 30 seconds. (2.)

The Portland sightings were particularly convincing to the International News Service because the discs were plainly visible from the bureau's Portland office. (3.)

The aerial show over Portland was the beginning of a huge wave of sightings that would cover the whole nation.

At Hauser Lake, Idaho, 200 persons attending an Independence Day ball game watched a disc moving around in the sky for 30 minutes before it shot straight up out of sight. (4.)

Sixty more persons at Twin Falls, Idaho, were enjoying a picnic when three groups of discs flew into view: "Some of the saucers were described as flying in V-formation, while others circled and dived in loose formation." (5.)

Reported flying disc behavior was peculiar and the mere oddness of it seems to indicate witnesses were either seeing actual objects, or that people's imaginations were carefully attuned. One witness in Oroville, California, saw two discs over a school: "They were about a foot apart moving pretty fast; they kept circling and moving up and down." (6.)

At Bakersfield, California, witnesses watched a shiny, pie tin-like object speeding overhead. They said the object was: "flipping over and over as it crossed the sky." (7.)

More to the south, at Riverside, a woman watched a disc about the

size of a dinner plate cavorting in the air. The saucer: ". . . dipped and dived for ten minutes then took off toward Colton." The woman phoned the Riverside Daily Press and said that she thought saucers behaved "silly." (8.)

In all, about 2,000 saucer reports would be made in the U.S.*

Down Mexico way, according to United Press, Mexicans spotted some saucers in the sky near the U.S. Border. Discs were reported over the cities of Juarez, Chihuahua, and Mexicali. Phone calls were made to the Mexican National Defense Ministry, but the ministry spokesman that handled the calls put an abrupt end to inquiries, saying: "Don't call me, I don't believe in the things." (9.) Up north an unnamed RCAF spokesman in Ottawa told the press brusquely: "Catch one and we'll look into the matter." (10.) No doubt the RCAF spokesman was somewhat disconcerted a short time later when the press reported: "Ontario, Canada, joined the parade of places where the disks have been reported sighted. Scores of residents of the Wallaceburg area in southwest Ontario said today they saw two large formations of flying saucers swing over a wide arc in the sky. . . ." (11.)

In fact, a number of reports came in from Canada. On June 26th something was seen in the sky over Ottawa. It hovered for five minutes. About the same time a weird, glowing "flying stove-pipe" was seen flying over Lake Deschenes near Ottawa. From Prince Edward Island came a report on July 2nd telling of the passage of a strange object headed north. A bright green flying disc appeared over Ottawa July 4th, and the same day some residents of Sarnia, Ontario, reported some flying objects a little over a foot in diameter that resembled "translucent plates." The following day a flying saucer sighting was made at Sherbrooke, Quebec; and on July 7th, another disc was spotted over St. Catherines, Ontario. Finally, on July 9th, five saucers were seen over Kincardine, Ontario.

A science writer for one of the news services agreed with the skeptics and wrote a long article which blamed the flying saucer sightings on light reflections, but a New York psychiatrist countered with a statement to the press which pointed out that the number of "mental mistakes" were too massive to be just psychological. Furthermore, one newspaperman in Tennessee swore that he had seen some unexplained flying discs way back in 1945, long before the current flap. He told the press that the objects he saw in 1945 looked: ". . .a bright aluminum color and were going at terrific speed." The journalist stated that he had not called attention to what he had seen because he thought the objects were connected with the highly secret activity at nearby Oak Ridge. (12.)

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*The most complete record of the 1947 UFO flap is contained in Ted Bloecher's The Report on the UFO Wave of 1947. This book is a detailed chronological record of some 850 UFO sightings reported in the United States between June 1st to July 30th. There is also considerable analysis of press coverage which is highly informative.

Mr. Bloecher estimates that if small town papers were searched, the 850 figure could be doubled. A search of 102 small town newspapers in one state, California, confirms Mr. Bloecher's guess. Some of the more interesting reports from this study of California newspapers are given in this book.

Also on July Fourth, a forest ranger stationed at a lookout tower north of Fort Ross, California, observed something odd on the surface of the ocean about ten miles off the coast. It appeared to be a burning ship that sank after some twenty minutes. The coast guard searched the whole area thoroughly with no results. A check showed that no ships were supposed to have been in the area at the time of the sighting, nor was any vessel reported missing. The ranger, Earl Halle, nevertheless, insisted he had seen what appeared to have been a ship afire on the horizon. (13.) The report may have given U.S. Intelligence a jolt. Was the thing a Russian submarine launching robot aircraft?

It must be noted that ranger Hall's sighting is not unique. UFOs emitting intense crimson light have been mistaken for burning ships before, when the UFOs were apparently resting on the surface of the ocean or hovering just above it. There are also many cases of glowing and smoking "meteors plunging out of the sky and into the sea, which were possibly UFOs.

Probably the most dramatic conversion from skeptic to believer was the experience of Captain E. J. Smith, a story that made nearly every major newspaper.

As early as June 26th Captain Smith, a pilot for United Air Lines, had been approached by reporters and asked for his opinion on the flying saucers being seen over the northwest, an area where he regularly flew airliners. He told reporters: "I've never seen anything like that [Arnold's flying saucers] and the boys [other pilots] say they haven't either. . .what that other fellow [Arnold] probably saw was the reflection of his own instrument panel." (14.)

On the evening of July 4th at Boise, Idaho, Captain Smith was walking up the ramp to board his plane, flight 105, for a trip to Seattle when someone mentioned the massive wave of saucers taking place all day over the northwest. Captain Smith joked: "I'll believe in those discs when I see them." (15.)

The airliner lifted off at 9:04 p.m. and turned toward Seattle. As Captain Smith remembers it, the control tower at Boise bid him farewell by: ". . .joshingly warning us to be on the lookout for 'flying saucers.'" (16.)

Shortly after takeoff five disc-like objects, one larger than the rest, approached Captain Smith's DC-3 headon. Stunned, Captain Smith and his co-pilot Ralph Stevens watched as the objects quickly reversed direction and took up a course that paralleled their own. For 45 miles Captain Smith was able to keep the objects in sight. Co-pilot Stevens thought the objects were aircraft at first and flashed the airliner's landing lights. The objects reacted by changing formation from a very tight cluster to a more open one. The cluster of discs then began to open and close repeatedly before settling down into a loose formation. This group soon vanished and another group of four came into view. The new group soon merged and vanished to the northwest. The airliner's stewardess, Miss Marty Morrow, verified the sightings. (17.) (18.)

Flight 105's next scheduled stop was the airport at Pendleton, Oregon, a place not unfamiliar with flying saucers. Captain Smith radioed ahead, telling the Pnedleton control tower that he and his crew had just seen a whole flock of the mysterious flying discs.

Airport officials contacted the press and had a newspaper reporter on the telephone as Captain Smith taxied his airliner up to the Pendleton airport terminal. Within moments of landing, a shaken Captain Smith was relating all the details. (19.)

The Captain Smith report was picked up by Reuters News Service and sent around the world. Even some small eight page newspapers in India carried a lengthy account of Captain Smith's experience, along with references to the massive wave of UFO sightings that were exciting the whole of the U.S.

From Dayton, Ohio, at this time, came the following news item:

> German scientists shook their heads in wonderment today over reports of mysterious "flying saucers" skittering thru the skies over a dozen states.
>
> A spokesman said the scientists, many of them experts from the Nazis' most carefully guarded experimental laboratories, "say they never heard of anything from the past, present or future answering the description.
>
> Guided missile experts here also professed ignorance. (20.)

Yet in spite of the above disavowals, the public imagination was dry tinder awaiting only a sizable spark to set it aflame. One such spark came on the afternoon of July 4th in the form of a letter. The Los Angeles Examiner received a crudely written note on July 4th that alleged the flying saucers were newly invented Russian atom powered planes, aircraft that left deadly radioactive clouds in their wake. The writer of the letter claimed that the information came from Russian crewmen of a Soviet tanker that had visited Los Angeles harbor a few days before.

The Examiner showed the letter to a nuclear physicist who said the idea was: ". . .not entirely nonsense." (21.) The reaction of the physicist prompted the Examiner to publish the story and to contact the FBI.

The Russian Vice Consul in Los Angeles, Eugene Tunantzev, replied to the charge as soon as he heard of it:

> Russia respects the sovereignty of all government and by no stretch of the imagination would it use another country for a proving ground. . .Russia has plenty of territory of its own for any scientific experimentation. (22.)

The United Press had the following to add to Tunantzev's denial:

> High-ranking U.S. Army officers agreed with Tunantzev. They discounted theories that the flying discs might be secret weapons. . .they said it was significant that none of the discs had yet registered on army radar. (23.)

But Tunantzev's assurances failed to smooth things over. The big wave of UFO sightings had hit the West Coast the same day, July 4th, and the first indications of panic appeared. The most vulnerable point was Hawaii with memories of the attack on Pearl Harbor still very vivid. The news from Hawaii was generally ignored for very little of the excitement that began to sweep through

the islands appeared in the newspapers on the mainland. The Denver (Colorado) Post, however, had a very active staff on duty during the holiday and they took the initiative by placing phone calls to various sections of the country. In Hawaii the Post found out that: ". . .there were wild rumors that the United States was at war with Russia, and that the Soviet was sending the devices [saucers] over the country by way of the north pole." (24.)

The rumors may well have been triggered by military officers, for Kenneth Arnold's "flying saucers" had been spotted coming from the direction of the artic and the reported motion of the odd disc-like craft resembled that which one might expect from a long-range, Sanger type, rocket. In Washington, this must have caused a stir for within a short time the press was notified that certain steps had been taken. The Associated Press told the nation that on July 6th: "The Army Air Force alerted jet and conventional fighter planes on the Pacific Coast. . .in the hopes of chasing and explaining the mystery of the 'flying saucers' which in 12 days has challenged the entire country." (25.) It was emphasized that the primary mission of the military alert was the photographic identification of the phenomenon, but the press found out that the warplanes were also armed with live ammunition. (26)

In the Pacific Northwest it was learned that aircraft were on aerial patrol, ready at moment's notice in case a flying saucer appeared. The newspapers reported: "Five P-51s of the Oregon National Guard cruised over the Cascade mountains of Washington—a sixth circled over Portland in constant radio contact with the other five." (27.) The Seattle Post-Intelligencer declared: "Swamped with newspaper calls from cities all over the country, the War Department in Washington had nothing to say to shed light on the weird phenomena." And in the same excited tone the Seattle paper continued: "News wires carried thousands of words as a mass of evidence mounted swiftly throughout the day. Literally hundreds of aerial and ground observers concurred in reports of single and multiple discs." Kenneth Arnold met United Airlines Captain E. J. Smith at the Post-Intelligencer office in Seattle and together they examined a fuzzy image on a photograph taken the day before by Coast Guard Yeoman Frank Ryman. The Post-Intelligencer quoted the two as agreeing that: "we can't all be crazy." (28.)

General Carl Spaatz, Army Air Force Commandant, rushed to the Pacific Northwest, while a Pentagon spokesman insisted that: ". . . he [Spaatz] had not gone there to investigate [the saucers], but merely to make a speech at Seattle and for an airfield inspection at Tacoma." (29.)

The Chicago Daily News reported:

> The National Commander in Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars told newsmen in Columbus, Ohio, it is his understanding General Spaatz had experts combing the country attempting to identify the discs.
>
> Capt. Tom Brown of the Air Force public relations staff in Washington acknowledged that the Air Force had decided there was "something to the saucer reports" and have been actively investigating the mystery for ten days without much results." (30.)

Flying Disc Enigma

MYSTERY FLOODS HAWAII WI

By ROBERT W. FENWICK.
Rocky Mountain Empire Editor of The Denver Post.

Copyright, 1947, Post Printing and Publishing Company.

Tinged with dread of the unknown, an eerie [illegible] mystery caused by first in western strange "flying spread from the Rc tain Empire thro nation Saturday gripped far-away

The nation was strange discs had ed in twenty-eight states by Saturday evening. Wire services were glutted with ru and reports.

THE DENVER POST ducted a coast-to-coast tem ide tron il, i en E P ew hat no

NATION IS RIPE FOR HYSTERIA

Scientists Comment on 'Flying Disks.'

By PAUL F. ELLIS,
United Press Science Writer.

July 9.—Thr y that the the "flying an that psy an atomic c r outnumbe omb explosi experts, Dr tor of the or mental a escribed ma "saucers" a nown as "p cal receptiveness."

Dr. Strecker said that at ginning of the saucer episo persons "may have seen sc

Disc Blitz Feared As Lights Go Out

LODI, Cal., July 7 (UP)—Residents of Acampo, a residential community one-mile north of here, thought for sure they were being attacked by flying saucers before dawn Sunday when they heard a roar, saw a glow in the sky—

Grips Nation

TH WAR RUMORS

nection with atomic energy experiments.

thing" about the flying discs.

Alexander de Seversky, in- of General Electric in charge of secret experiments for the nec- new iles ews- l for any re- wild ates and ding ntry

Meanwhile, reports came from Louisiana, Ma west coast points shiny, circular obje tradicted a report published ening un- iclear titute the ts of mic ils." could say- and the enon, can say anything definite about it."

Lilienthal was anxious to know if any of them had [illegible] the ground."

Never Heard of Disks, Says Molotov Secretary

DAYTON, Ohio, July 9.—(UP)—Marshall Stross, reporter for the Dayton Herald, today called Foreign Minister Viacheslav Molotov in Moscow by telephone to ask if he had heard about America's "flying saucers."

Molotov wasn't available, but Stross spoke to his personal secretary, Peter Seminov, and asked him the question.

"No," said Seminov.

That ended the conversation except for a few exchanges about the weather and some "small talk."

Alerts Planes on W. Coast

'May Be Something' To Flying Saucers

SAN FRANCISCO—(AP)—The Army Air Forces alerted

'FLYING DISC' MYSTERY DEEPENS IN 10 STATES

Army Air Forces Belittle Increasing Reports

BULLETIN
By the Associated Press

Several persons in the vicinity of Little Rock, Hot Springs and Texarkana said Thursday they had seen the mysterious "flying saucers" which were first report-

On July 4th the Denver Post placed a call to David E. Lilienthal, head of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, to ask if the flying discs had anything to do with government atomic projects. Mr. Lilienthal denied that was the case but he told the Denver Post that he: ". . .was anxious to know if any of them had 'fallen to the ground.'" (31.)

The Naval Observatory at Washington, D.C. concluded on July 5th that: ". . .the mysterious 'flying saucers' were not at least, astronomical phenomena." (32.)

Dr. H. H. Nininger, director of the American Meteorite museum near Winslow, Arizona, made the simple observation that if the flying saucers were meteors then: ". . .the sky would be filled with them at night, when they would be more visible." (33.)

In Idaho Kenneth Arnold planned a disc expeditionary flight and an Army Colonel asked to accompany him. The request was a sign of how things had changed. Just before Arnold took off he told the press: ". . . a lot of people first thought I was cracked, but they'll have to change their tune now." (34.)

Just as the saucer mystery threaten to create a panic, a conference was called at Los Alamos, New Mexico. The Denver Post learned of the gathering because of its special relationship with a Dr. Roberts. On July 6th the Post printed:

> One puzzling aspect of the nationally watched enigma of the heavens was a meeting in New Mexico of Los Alamos officials and Dr. Walter Orr Robert, superintendent of the high altitude observatory of Harvard and Colorado universities at Climax, Colo. A telephone call to Los Alamos and White Sands, N.M. failed to locate Roberts or the officials with him. Roberts is a regular contributor to the Denver Post. (35.)

Also on the 6th of July, a widely publicized incident occurred at Acampo, California. The United Press reported:

> Residents of Acampo. . .thought for sure they were being attacked by flying saucers before dawn Sunday when they heard a roar, saw a glow in the sky—and then all the lights went out. . .[witnesses said] the noise was "like a four-motored bomber with its props feathered for a take off." Looking toward the sky [witnesses] saw the glow, as all power in the community went off. (36.)

It may have been just a coincidence, but on the following day a number of official comments appeared in the press urging people to remain calm.

The assistant chief of air staff for research and development, Major General C.E. LeMay, was quoted by the Chicago Daily Tribune as saying he believed the: ". . .disc reports are 'nothing to worry about.'" (37.)

The Air Material Command of the Army Air Forces at Wright Field insisted it could not take action because as yet it had no: ". . .

reputable information." (38.)

Genral Irving O. Schaefer, commanding officer of Colorado's National Guard, admitted that fighter planes under his command were on standby ready to take off and intercept the flying discs at a moment's notice, but he: ". . .cautioned against any 'mass hysteria.'" (39.)

Likewise, Maj. Duncan Annam, public relations officer of McClellan Field in California, was quoted by the Los Angeles Times as saying: "Lots of people are worried to heck about the things [saucers], but there's nothing to get excited about. If there were anything to them the Army would have notified us." (40.)

Flying discs invaded the airspace of northwestern California on July 7th and Sheriff B. J. Richardson told the Yreka-Journal that he was receiving numerous phone calls. One woman said she had seen strange discs high in the sky over the Marble Mountains "surrounded by balls of fire." Also, an elderly gentleman phoned the Sheriff and declared that: ". . .eerie colored discs which glinted in icy greens and blues had swooped low over his home." Terrified, the man had shouted over the phone: "It's the end of the world, send help!" (41.)

Most sightings,however, were less spectacular. Typical was the report of two farmers harvesting barley near Glenn, California. During the afternoon of July 7th the two men noticed the sun reflecting off three rows of discs flying at great speed high overhead They said the discs: ". . .moved with an up and down motion and also tipped from side to side." There were about twenty-five of the objects which maintained perfect formation but before they passed out of sight the three row formation changed into a perfect "v." (42.)

Two teenagers were surf fishing at Fort Bragg, California, on July 7th when, about 3:10 p.m., they noticed a "flat glistening object" in the sky approaching them from the direction of the ocean. The object lost altitude rapidly and hit the water about 400 yards from shore. The impact kicked up a tall column of water, but the object floated for a while before it apparently sank. It seemed to be about the size of an auto tire.*(43.)

Tiffany Thayer received one clipping, an editorial from an issue of the Washington Post,which quoted the head of the U.S. Bureau of Standards as saying he was: ". . .satisfied that the whole thing [the flying saucers] is just one of those mass illusions like the Loch Ness sea monster." (44.) Thayer remembered the quote when he was compiling flying saucer reports for publication in Doubt, so when the Toronto Globe and Mail reported that an eye specialist in the city of Saskatoon had sighted a half dozen discs crossing the sky, Thayer couldn't resist a comment: "If an 'eye specialist' doesn't know what he sees who does?" (45.)

A noteworthy item was a peculiar story in a Houston, Texas, newspaper about the alleged discovery of an aluminum disc, twenty inches across and six inches thick. The disc was supposed to have been marked with the following words:

---

*An identical incident took place January 18, 1956, off Redondo Beach, California.

NON-EXPLOSIVE. . .Military secret of the United States of America, Army Air Forces M4339658. Anyone damaging or revealing description or whereabouts of the missile subject to prosecution by the U. S. Government. Call collect at once, LD 446, Army Air Force Depot, Spokane, Washington. (46.)

The day after the above story appeared in the Houston paper the gentleman responsible changed his mind and said the Air Force saucer-missile tale was a practical joke. The episode is mentioned here because an almost identical story surfaced in March, 1950, during a radio broadcast by a respected news commentator. The broadcast was put into print for the July, 1950, issue of Readers Digest. Referring to an unnamed but allegedly authoritative source, it was asserted that the flying saucers were real missiles and were "good news" for Americans, but the time was not ripe for revealing their secrets. (47.) The story was met with considerable scoffing but remains an unexplained footnote to the UFO mystery.

Anyway, returning to July, 1947, we find that something similar to the Houston hoax followed quickly on its heels.

Chapter Nine

End of the Beginning

"Flying saucer found! U.S. military experts now inspecting a crashed disc in New Mexico!" Radio stations startled a jittery American public on July 8th with the forementioned news bulletin. An Army press agent, it seems, had announced unequivocally to the news media that a saucer had crashed on a ranch in New Mexico and that the military was examining the wreckage. The news media jammed all the telephone lines to New Mexico to obtain details on the downed disc. Even three London newspapers tried to get through.

The commanding general of the Eighth Air Force, General R.M. Ramey, tried to quiet the furor by going on the radio, and at the Pentagon, Lt. General Hoyt Vandenburg, deputy chief of the Army Air Force, rushed to the press section to take charge personally because the confusion there was running a close second to the uproar in New Mexico. Memory of the clamor evidently made a long lasting impression on Vandenburg. (1.)

Just as the wreckage of the alleged saucer was about to be packed and sent to Air Force Intelligence at Wright Field, Ohio, for closer examination, an Army weather man identified the "saucer wreckage" as merely the remains of an old weather balloon. (2.)

The Pentagon claimed it was greatly embarrassed by the mistake but the effect of the episode must have been welcome. There had been a big letdown and its psychological influence put a brake on the accelerating excitement. As it turned out President Truman's Press Secretary chose this moment to announce that the Chief Executive had not yet authorized a full scale investigation into the flying saucer mystery.(3.) This announcement was accompanied in the press by quotes from three prominent scientists who scolded the American public for succumbing to "group hysteria." (4.)

In the smaller communities there were UFO sightings of interest that never made newspapers of large circulation. As a consequence many reports have never been widely publicized. For example, near the small town of Lodi, California, south of Sacramento, something was seen at a very low altitude not many hours after the neighboring community of Acampo suffered an unexplained electric power blackout. A farmer by the name of Lloyd, got up early the morning of July 6th and was working in his vineyard, which was northwest of Lodi on Telegraph Road, when he saw a flying disc. According to a local newspaper Mr. Lloyd:

> . . .said the saucer was gray in color and about the size of an automobile steering wheel. He estimated that it was flying about 20 feet above the ground [Mr. Lloyd] . . .was plowing when he first noticed the object 300 feet away. It was traveling in a southerly direction and narrowly missed the pump house at his home, he explained. As far as he was able to determine, no one else saw it.
>
> Lloyd said the noise made by the motor of his tractor drowned out any noise made by the "flying saucer." It was traveling in a straight line and maintained the same

altitude. (5.)

Tiffany Thayer,of course, got a big bang out of the saucer stories, in the beginning at least, and he especially enjoyed the following two reports. It seems that at Palmdale, California, a housewife had phoned the local sheriff about a "mother disc" and its "milling" children. The sheriff thanked the woman and hung up with an abrupt click. Apparently it was just another one of those wild saucer stories. Yet Thayer had received a clipping from Tacoma, Washington which told of something very similar, seen about the same time, by lawmen!

Here are the cases as they were reported in the local Tacoma and Palmdale newspapers.

Early in the morning of July 7, 1947, a bright moon hung in the dark, cloudless sky over Tacoma. Things were quiet around town until a little after 2:30 when an officer Johnson noticed some strange glowing discs moving rapidly about the sky. After watching, for a while, in disbelief he finally turned to his partner and asked:

"Do you see anything, Skip?" Yeah, do You?" Davies answered, cautiously.

"Uh huh. Over to the left of that big tree," Johnson replied.

"I thought I was screwy," Davies remarked with apparent relief. "I've been watching it for five minutes."

"So have I," Johnson admitted.

The mysterious objects moved so fast they took one's breath away. The discs glowed, turning: ". . .from a brilliant red to purple to blue-white and back to red, progressing through the color cycle as they moved about on an erratic course. . . ." One disc leaped 5,000 feet straight up in a split second. No sound was heard during the performance. (6.)

Another newspaper learned these additional details from the two policemen:

> One central saucer, they said, appeared to act as sort of a "flagship." It appeared larger or closer than the others, with the smaller saucers repeatedly making sorties to the proximity of the larger disc and then gliding away southward. (7.)

Unfortunately, the Palmdale report was much less detailed:

> One Palmdale woman reports seeing a "Mother Saucer" with a bunch of little saucers playing around in the sky. Occasionally the smaller saucers would return to the mother saucer for nourishment or gasoline or whatever the saucers use to romp around in the atmosphere. (8.)

There was one report from Riverside, California, that is sure to catch the eye of any modern UFO buff for there has been much speculation since 1947 about UFOs and electrical power outages. On July 7th a man reported to the Riverside Daily Press that: ". . .he saw six discs 'the size of small plates' hovering over a power line when he went outside to find the cause of static in

his radio." (9.)

Although Albert Einstein refused any comment on the aerial mystery, (10.) famed physicist Luis Alvarez told the press he had doubts about reported size and speed estimates in flying saucer reports, pointing out that such estimates would have to be highly subjective. (11.) The professor made no mention, however, about reported characteristics that were not so subjective in nature and showed a very high degree of uniformity.

When the massive July 4th wave of UFO sightings hit the newswires, many news media editors that had previously harbored suspicions the saucers were just a brief summer silliness, now became convinced there must be something to the phenomenon, and sent reporters scattering in all directions to colleges of psychology, to army posts,to private laboratories, and to weather bureaus, in the hope of finding a clue that would lead to a solution of the mystery.

By this time author R. DeWitt Miller spoke up and gave his opinions to United Press. He said the UFO problem was a very old one but that he was nonetheless impressed with the recent excitement. He said; "Never have reports of strange sky phenomena been so widespread and so uniform as the 'flying saucers.'" He suggested three possible solutions to the riddle: 1.) U.S. secret weapons, 2) Craft from outer space, 3) Devices from some other dimensions of time and space. (12.)

The same day, July 8th, an official statement came out of Washington, D.C. The word "not" is how it appeared in the newsstory:

> Official Washington was sure today that it knew what the flying saucers were NOT—but it hadn't the faintest idea what they were.
>
> The Army Air Forces said they had the matter under investigation.
>
> Preliminary study has revealed that the flying saucers are NOT:
>
> 1. Secret bacteriological weapons designed by some foreign powers.
> 2. New type Army rockets.
> 3. Space ships.
>
> Privately, some Air Force officers say the saucers are NOT—and let it go at that. But officially, the AAF said it is "keeping an open mind" because the disks have been reported by so many responsible persons. (13.)

It wasn't long before Walter Winchell was quoting R. DeWitt Miller but we know he could have done better than that. As it turned out an Associated Press reporter made the discovery in Chicago's Newberry Library. There the reporter claimed to have discovered a "rare unknown" book, the scarlet colored volume titled The Book of the Damned. (14.) Thayer howled with laughter when he read about the "great discovery" of the "unknown" book. Awhile after this "discovery" the news agencies tracked Thayer and the Forteans to their lair (July 23rd) to ask: "Who was this guy Fort?" And: "Can we quote such and such?" This was the high-point of the whole history of the Fortean Society and it was sad

Fort himself was not alive to take a well-earned bow.

Orville Wright, co-inventor of the airplane, was still alive and kicking, however, and out of Dayton, Ohio, the home of the retired pioneer, came a statement attributed to the famed aviator on July 8th, which pinned the disc scare on the Pentagon trying to ignite World War III. (15.) Thayer awarded the highest Fortean honor on the old flyer, a Society Fellowship.

In spite of Mr. Wright's explanation the public was more inclined to believe their eyes. A motorist traveling near Indianapolis saw a "low-flying, fiery, copper-colored, disc" flash by. He stepped on the gas and managed to keep the object in sight for 10 minutes. Police pulled him over and gave him a ticket for speeding. (16.)

Sightings had become so numerous that when authorities in the state of Kansas said there had been no reports in that state so far, the claim was treated as news and carried on the news wires: "Kansas Sees no Sauoers." Rewards for one of the elusive discs ran from a mere 3,000 dollars to a cool million.

The Fortean Society publication, Doubt, number 19, covering the months of June and July, 1947, would be a memorable issue for its editor Tiffany Thayer. The flying saucer story would fill nearly every page, an awkward turn of events since the Society under Thayer's leadership had wandered a long way from Charles Fort's hypothesizing about scout craft from a celestial super-Rome. Anti-Wassermen testers, anti-vivisectionists, anti-vaccinationists, flat earth adherents, and proponents of universal disarmament, to name a few, had all but taken over the space available in Doubt.

There was no way to ignore the saucers for the moment, so Thayer planned to print what was pouring into Fortean headquarters. However, he introduced the special flying saucer issue of Doubt with an 800 word essay on what he believed to be the future intent, and past accomplishments, of the nation's newspapers to sell the American public various "pipedreams." Newspapers he believed that were captained by editors with woodpulp souls. And then he began to list and make a brief remark about every saucer sighting, but after reaching the 380th item he ran out of room. Such a collection! Compared to other topics the saucer story was a tidal wave. For once Thayer began to develop a dislike for some Fortean data, and it took the fun out of things when he had to compete with Time and Life.

That there had been a few speculations about space visitors never really thrilled Thayer since such ideas never had much of an appeal to him. Shucks, Thayer commented, the Fortean Society already had one member who claimed nightly conversations with the inhabitants of the planet Venus.

Charles Fort's name turned up in highly friendly news dispatches from Los Angeles to Scotland and was mentioned in some scientific journals, which was one result of the saucer controversy Thayer could not fault in the least.

Thayer also enjoyed the fact that the Fortean Society had come across a saucer sighting that was printed on June 7, 1947, some seventeen days before the Kenneth Arnold report. According to the Times of India saucer-shaped objects were seen in the sky

over Bombay, India. The report read: "About 9:00, a dazzling object emitting blue and red light, [was seen]. . .fifteen minutes later, another [object was sighted which emitted a] . . . blue light. The latter was round in shape [and was] . . .accompanied by several smaller sized ones." (17.)

The American press may have missed the Bombay sighting, but it came up with one of equal interest from China on July 14, 1947: "Shanghai—(AP). . .North China news agency said crowds of Chinese near the summer palace in Peiping's suburbs reported seeing 'an enormous saucer emitting bright beams in all directions and dazzling the eyes of all who saw it. . .." (18.)

Other reports from overseas in July came from Australia, South Africa, Ireland, Norway, Italy,France, and one from an aircraft flying over the Bay of Biscay. According to a Captain Norman Waugh, he was piloting a twin-engined Viking aircraft over the bay when a strange object passed him by. He estimated that the object was traveling over 600 miles per hour at an altitude of about 15,000 feet above the sea and was headed in a northeast direction. (19.) England contributed one of those odd "mother ship" sightings on July 11th when a woman told authorities she had seen: ". . .a large object with smaller saucers scuttling along behind." (20.) Holland's Leyden Naval Radio Service broadcast a report of a cluster of flying discs traveling across the sky at great speed and altitude. A short time later the Netherlands News Agency reported a single flying disc, also crossing the sky high up and at a tremendous velocity. (21.)

Witnesses in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on July 8th, claimed to have spotted four luminous discs speeding overhead, traveling in pairs. The objects came out of the northeast and then headed south. Charles Julia, a prominent San Juan lawyer, told the press he had seen a similar bright colored object a few days previously but had thought the thing was the result of some sort of government experiment. (22.)

On July 10th newspapers in Rio De Janeiro announced the sighting of the mystery objects over Brazilian territory, particularly in the skies over the city of Presidente Prudente, in the state of Sao Paulo. One expert tried to explain the objects as "meteoric stones which had lost their brilliance," but witnesses rejected the suggestion. The Brazilian Minister of War declared that he was planning to visit President Prudente and other areas where the strange objects were reported. Less impressed, however, was the Rio morning paper Diario Da Noite which blamed the outbreak on a worldwide psychosis. (23.)

From Guatemala in Central America came the report of a sighting at the city of Ixtapa, close to the Mexico border. Travelers boarding at Pan American Airways airliner yelled in surprise as a flat-shaped object trailing golden vapor crossed the sky. (24.)

According to a survey of some South American newspapers sources, as published by the Argentine Center for the Study of Unusual Phenomena, numerous cities in Chile, Argentine, and Uruguay, reported UFO sightings during July. This survey is probably not totally complete and there was no survey of other South American countries, but there seems to be some indication that the UFO wave in the United States slowly shifted south, peaking around July 10th-14th in the Santiago-Buenos Aires region.

Cities reporting UFO sightings in Argentina were: July 11th, La Plata; and on July 15th, Buenos Aires. At the Argentine city of Balcare, July 19th, police, townspeiople, and railroad workers, reported a whole flock of flying discs, about 50 in number, passing from north to south during a rainstorm. It was said that the discs appeared to be about 20 centimeters in diameter. (25.)

Sightings made in Chile were: July 7th, Algambo; July 9th, Los Cerrillas; July 10th, Santiago (2); July 11th, Valdinia, and Alcones; July 12th, Volcan Calbuco, and Maria Pinto; July 13th Santiago, and Puyehue; July 14th, Temuco, and Caldera; July 17th, Valparaiso (2) and San Antonio; July 21st, Cajon, and finally on July 23rd something was seen in the air over Frutillar. Uruguay reported sightings at Colon on July 6th and one at Punta del Este on July 11th. (26.)

It was only a matter of time before Kenneth Arnold became aware of that collection center for strange data, and forum for speculation, the Fortean Society. Arnold applied for membership, and writing to Thayer suggested the Society sponsor him on a lecture tour to help turn up clues to the origin of the mystery objects. But Arnold encountered Thayer's rapidly diminishing interest in the flying saucer subject and received a negative answer. (27.) Since such magazines as Popular Science and The Saturday Evening Post were putting out welcoming hands to the flying discs as a proper subject to print, Thayer's initial lukewarm enthusiasm for the mystery cooled more and more. Although the Fortean Society had, for over a decade, been a clearing house for outcasts, nothing in any other category approached the volume of flying saucer data saturating the organization's mail. Thayer felt the Society might be in danger of losing its rebellious reputation if it entertained any extraterrestial matters which had suddenly become so familiar andpopular. In any case the UFO subject had achieved the momentum it needed to get along without being championed by the Fortean Society.

Since the newspapers were doing a good job of covering the UFO enigma, Thayer printed less and less about the mystery in Doubt from then on, returning the vacated space to his favorite topic of perpetuating dissent.

A passing note should be made of the first recorded "encounter" case having to do with the 1947 flying saucer wave. On July 9th the following account appeared in the Nashville Tennessean:

> Meanwhile as newspaper office telephone calls on this latest form of mid-summer madness multiply, it's obvious that the subject is getting a grip on people. One man, apparently perfectly sane and sober, wrote the editor of the Nashville Tennessean a long, interesting letter about his brush with a couple of Men from Mars on a nearby flying field.
>
> The strange little men, "all heads and arms and legs, and glowing like fireflies," landed and alighted from a flying saucer as he drove along a highway, the man wrote.
>
> The man from Nashville and the Men from Mars exchanged greetings (in sign language) and the saucer finally took off in a cloud of dust, so the letter says. (28.)

One wonders just what the military was now thinking. Take General Carl Spaatz for example. We can get some idea from an article that appeared in the Saturday Evening Post in 1949. General Spaatz, Air Force Chief of Staff, was well aware, it seems, that the Russians were tinkering with all kinds of new aircraft and missiles, but if the saucers were Soviet devices, how come they evaded detection coming and going from Russian territory? And military Intelligence had absolutely nothing to show for its investigation efforts, not even: ". . .a loose nut off any unexplained object to examine." (29.)

On July 10th the San Francisco Chronicle titled the latest saucer news: "Few Discs Now—Story Cooling Off." A feeling began to grow that in spite of everything perhaps people had only been "seeing things." (30.) Events had seemingly reached a climax but nothing had happened. If the saucers were illusions they were becoming a bore because too many sightings were too similar. If the saucers were Russian, why hadn't the Communists boasted about it, or for that matter, attacked us. If the saucers were visitors from Mars, why hadn't they landed in front of the White House and presented their credentials. The Chronicle quoted Senator Taylor (D. Idaho) who told the press: "I almost wish the flying saucers would turn out to be space ships from another planet." It was explained by the Chronicle that: "Senator Tayor is plugging for a United States of the World and said the mere possibility that the spinning discs might be hostile 'would unify the people of the earth as nothing else could.'" (31.)

And who should turn up on July 10th but Mr. Dana Thomas. Now a white-haired old gentleman he nonetheless had clear memories of the 1896 airship excitement. He told the San Jose (Calif.) Mercury-Herald that the current flying saucer controversy reminded him of the old airship mystery and how the San Francisco Call had championed the airship's existence. He also mentioned the antics of California's one-time Attorney General H.H.H. Hart who "knew the airship's inventor." Most of all, however, Mr. Thomas enjoyed telling the Mercury-Herald how one fellow made money off the airship mystery and never missed a beat even when faced with potential disaster:

> An enterprising showman had two trucks of odds and ends of sheet metal dumped at night at Twin Peaks. He "discovered" it the next day and declared that it was an airship wrecked as it struck the side of the hill. Admission was charged for seeing the "remains" until one of the truckmen saw the bottom of too many whiskey glasses and told the part he had played in the deception. The admission sign was changed to "The greatest hoax of the century." (32.)

Another person who commented on the flying disc mystery on July 10th was the Chief Executive. An INS newsstory datelined Washington read:

> President Truman today said that current stories of "flying saucers' reminded him of the "moon hoax" which

had the citizenry agog a century or so ago.

Asked at his news conference whether he had seen any "saucers" the president laughed and said he had not—none except those in the newspapers. He then asked newsmen whether they had heard of the moon hoax. That incident grew out of a series of highly imaginative "scientific" illustrations published in the New York Sun about the middle of the last century, purporting to describe life on the moon. (33.)

Skeptics of the flying saucers like to blame Kenneth Arnold for "starting it all," thus the most sought after saucer report is a clearly described flying disc sighting published in a newspaper just before Arnold's Washington sighting. No "early" 1947 disc report has been discovered in a major U.S. newspaper (Bloecher), but in some small town newspaper such a news item may yet be found. One intriguing report from Canada was printed July 13th in the Victoria, British, Columbia, Daily Colonist, which may be an authentic because UFO experts have subsequently determined that birds, dogs, horses, and other animals, react to the presence of UFOs.

Port Alberni, B.C. July 12—Flying saucers are old stuff in Alberni. They were sighted by Pearl Linton of Alberni, over the city in April. She saw two of them.

What is more, ducks and chickens are sensitive to the passing of the strange missiles. The attention of Miss Linton and Thomas Atkinson was drawn to the saucers by the crackling of ducks. Two disks of bright aluminum color were traveling in the direction of Beaufort Range. They were high and traveled on edge. (34.)

On July 17th Arnold turned up once again in Pendleton where he gave a lecture in the VFW hall on the subject of flying saucers. He told the assembled crowd the discs may utilize nuclear energy and then he brought up R. DeWitt Miller's book of Coronet articles that Walter Winchell had mentioned over the air. It is a certainty Arnold related his own experiences of June 24th something he has been asked to do a zillion times since. He also revealed a six hour interview with military intelligence that had taken place the previous weekend. The most interesting thing about the interview was that the Intelligence officers that talked to Arnold admitted the Air Force had known about the flying saucers as early as the month of April.* (35.)

"Eyes From Mars," read the little headline over a small article in one newspaper. The article stated:

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*An official U.S. Air Force report on UFOs, Project Blue Book Report #14, says the following about old UFO reports: "Sightings alleged to have occurred prior to 1947 were not considered since they were not reported to official sources until after public interest in 'flying saucers' had been stimulated by the popular press." (See p. 4.)

R. L. Farnworth of Chicago, president of the U.S. Rocket Society, a member of the Fortean society, a club honoring Charles Fort, founder of an anti-science cult. . .[said today] "this isn't the first time people have seen legitimate spots in the sky. It happened at least three times in the last century. Nobody ever found out what any of the objects were. Scientists agree they weren't astronomical bodies.

'Nothing surprises me. I wouldn't even be surprised if the flying saucers were remote-control eyes from Mars." (36.)

Perhaps the most striking thing about the flying saucer sightings was the reported behavior of the objects. Reports indicated that the objects exhibited distinctive traits. If so, were the flying saucers actual mechanical devices? Were they from another world?

The 1947 reports give the impression the reported objects were indeed artificial devices spying on America, weird aerial machines racing about the skies on mysterious and urgent missions. Significant characteristics taken from different eye witness accounts are given in the following list.

The following quotes are taken from Ted Bloecher's large collection of 1947 newspaper reports. The "case number" refers to the identifying code number Mr. Bloecher gave to every UFO report in his book Report on the UFO Wave of 1947.

Case 36: "The discs were weaving and circling very rapidly in formation and after a while they dispersed in all directions." (37.)

Case 277: "The object would fly in a circle for about five minutes and then shoot off a mile to the south, tear back again, stand still for half a minute, and then start circling again." (38.)

Case 373: "It circled clockwise very fast and then stopped quite suddenly. It then sped away. A moment later it returned and hovered for a minute or two before beginning to circle again." (39.)

Case 291: "The group of objects flew in a circular pattern until two broke loose and zoomed away. The cluster of circling objects then formed into a chain which became V-shaped. The formation flew away." (40.)

Case 707: "Two groups of objects approached Denver and when they arrived in the sky over the city they scattered over the downtown area where they hovered for a while. After a short time they resumed formation and sped off." (41.)

Things had become so calm by July 21st Newsweek felt it could write the flying saucer's epitaph. Newsweek declared that no one could explain the sudden absence of the objects while adding that "few cared." (42.)

One of Kenneth Arnold's last appearances in print during the hectic year of 1947 was when he was interviewed by a reporter from the Denver (Colorado) Post on July 22nd:

> Arnold was first to give an eyewitness account of the disks and "It's upset the whole routine of my life" he complains.
>
> It's not funny to me," said Arnold, on a business trip to Denver, Tuesday.
>
> "I don't read Popular Science or Startling Comics. I don't know anything about atomic fission. I don't know what it was I saw. All I know is that I saw nine objects that performed like aircraft, traveling at tremendous speed." (43.)

Actually, Kenneth Arnold's story was quite tame compared to some other flying saucer reports. One of the most fantastic was supposed to have occurred the very next day in South America. By way of an introduction, we should take note of a previously undocumented UFO report that describes a "Saturn-shaped" object.

The Watsonville, California, Register-Pajaronian, printed a letter to the editor on July 18th from a Mr. N.M. De Arman who wrote that he had been driving along a road a few days previously when:

> At a point some four miles northward from LeGrand my attention was taken by some object glistening in the sunlight forward and to my right. It was very high, and was waving, or bouncing up and down in its course, traveling in a direction which would take it across my road further ahead. At first I thought it was some type of aircraft which was having trouble, and was bound for a crash landing. I shut my own motor off and coasted. I put my head out the window listening for motor sounds. There was none. Next I thought to speed up, and if possible be there when it came down, but before I could get my car up to 75 miles per hour the shiny object had disappeared behind the far-away distant clouds. I have never seen anything like it in appearance. The first sight of it suggested Saturn and its rings to me. (44.)

By some strange coincidence another story about a "Saturn-like" flying object turned up in the Brazilian newspaper "Correio Do Noroeste concerning an episode that was alleged to have occurred July 23rd near the Brazilian city of Pitanga. According to the newspaper story a huge "Saturn-like," gray-white object was supposed to have swooped down and landed near a group of workmen. All the workmen fled except for a Mr. Jose Higgins who approached the mysterious craft. He told the Correio Do Noroeste that three strange beings emerged from a door in the object. The beings were at least seven feet tall and dressed in inflated space suits. Their heads were large and round. The eyes were likewise big and without eyebrows, in fact there seemed to be very little, if any, hair on the creatures. Mr. Higgins and the creatures attempted to converse but were unable to understand each other. Using sign language

and by drawing cirles in the dust, the creatures tried to communicate the idea they were from the seventh planet from the Sun. The creatures also motioned toward the door in their ship and Mr. Higgins feared he would be kidnapped so he slipped away when he got the opportunity. Before leaving, Mr. Higgins said he looked back and saw the three creatures gamboling about, leaping high in the air and tossing stones around without any apparent effort. (45.) Were there old issues of the Stockton Evening Mail in Pitanga's library?!

The end of the summer, 1947 UFO flap would hardly mark the end of the mystery. Indeed, UFO reports would continue and it wasn't long before more and more people were to share the feelings of Louis E. Starr. According to Time magazine the National Commander in Chief of the V.F.W., Louis E. Starr, became impatient with the lack of progress in the Air Force's investigation, so he: ". . . demanded a full and immediate explanation [from Washington]." When he got no answer, he announced: "Too little is being told to the people of this country." (46.)

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